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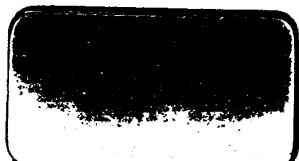
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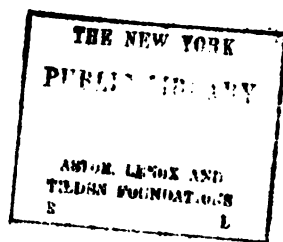
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# GRAYSTONE









# Graystone

*A NOVEL*

BY WILLIAM JASPER  
NICOLLS



PHILADELPHIA & LONDON  
J. B. LIPPINCOTT COMPANY  
MCMII





ONE  
MILLION

*"The sweetbrier is now in full blossom. It is one of the pleasantest shrubs in the whole wide world. With us it is not so very common as in most of the older countries, growing chiefly at intervals along the roadside and in fields which border the highways. One never sees it in the woods with the wild roses and other brambles, and although thoroughly naturalized in most parts of the country, we cannot claim it as a native."*

# GRAYSTONE

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## CHAPTER I

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*“The Redde rose medled with the White yfere  
In either cheeke depeinzen lively cheere.”*

**I**N a secluded corner of England, not far from the parish church where repose the venerated bones of the immortal Shakespeare,—a mere cross-roads of a place, with high, flowering hedges, tall forest trees, and surrounded by fertile fields,—there nestled cosily the few cottages constituting the village of Ashbourne. Here dwelt an honest and industrious widow by the name of Martine. In her youth she had married a handsome young American artist, whose soft brown eyes and wavy dark hair were now but a memory of happier days,—happy Bohemian days, when they had wandered along by-ways and hedges, seeking nothing, finding much. There was a



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wide disparity between them : He was all soul and imagination, while she was simply a hearty, good-natured Irish lass. Her blue eyes and black hair had so captivated his artistic fancy that he put aside all considerations of birth and intelligence—and they were married.

It was in the little hamlet of Villers-la-Ville, situated near Brussels,—where her father was studying the ruins of the old cathedral in which Peter the Hermit preached the Crusade,—that Ruth was born. The inn was a one-storied affair of roughly-hewn granite which had previously been occupied as a mill. The remains of the old water-wheel were still there, and behind the building was a garden enclosed within high stone walls. The spot was full of artistic possibilities. Here the dark-featured, dreamy artist lingered and sketched, while his practical wife gave to their only child the devoted care which laid the foundation of her future lusty, vigorous health.

Then they went to England, where the artist and book-lover spent his life in sincere, though futile, efforts to adapt his large and generous ideas to his small and meagre income.

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Meanwhile, Ruth grew up under her father's loving care, tall, straight, and beautiful; her deep black eyes darker than his, her nut-brown hair more certain of color, and her curved upper lip disclosing faultlessly white teeth—and a faint touch of her ancestry.

They had been companions from babyhood. When the question of a name was discussed, the poetical father at once suggested "Sweetbrier,"—"for she came up as a flower along the roadside," he added. But the wife took down her Bible and found in the name of Ruth one which satisfied her religious and conscientious scruples, and Ruth she was named; but to her father she still remained "Sweetbrier."

At six years of age she would sit spellbound by his wonderful stories from "Munchausen" and the tale of "Reynard the Fox;" and she believed them all, including Æsop's fables and their morals. At twelve she still believed the morals, but not the fables, and she began to take a wistful interest in her father and in his peculiarities. An instinctive yearning for his society, a prophetic dread of the unknown future, drew her closer to him. They took

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long walks through the lovely country lanes; he told her of the beautiful things in nature, and taught her to maintain an open heart and an ear for the songs of birds, the murmur of the brook, the rustling of forest leaves, and the language of the sighing winds. Little by little he would unfold his well-stored mind and talk of books until her thirsty soul longed to know and possess them all.

Then came the solemn farewell, when Death claimed the indulgent father. Ruth saw with childish grief the agony that set his gentle spirit free, and she experienced the first real sorrow of her life.

At fifteen years of age she was as much a problem to the Widow Martine as her neighbor Piggott's boys were to him. The widow was wiser in this respect,—she lost no sleep in trying to work out its solution. With the most passive faith she left that matter to future events.

She noticed, however, with some degree of satisfaction, a growing intimacy between her child and the older Piggott boy, and she looked forward to an agreeable union of interests.

By the sale of her husband's pictures and

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books she had accumulated sufficient money to purchase a little vine-covered cottage near the Piggott's,—the small front room of which became a modest shop, and in its window was displayed, among numerous other articles, the sign "Ginger Beer."

And now unexpectedly appeared Miss Blake, a maiden aunt, who had suddenly conceived the idea of going to America. Her plans included her niece as a companion, and incidentally as a beneficiary of her bounty; and the girl was quite willing to become both. Ruth's ideas, for a maid of her age, were serious. They included a passionate longing to see the world, and, having seen as much of it as possible, to do something. The "something" was apparently vague, but she felt sure that if the opportunity should present itself, the conclusion would necessarily follow.

Ruth Martine had become a tall, healthy young woman, with very decided views of her own. In her expressive eyes—which always appeared to look straight at you, and never with sidelong glances—there was a constant gaze of wondering curiosity, an unconscious effort to

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read your thoughts and to determine your motives, which often embarrassed those who came under her observation.

The dissimilarity between mother and daughter was marked by more than the mere years of a generation.

While the Widow Martine—more luck to her ginger-beer; no better could be had in all England—was now a contented and ignorant homebody, satisfied to “sit easy and sit still” for the rest of her natural days, the wistful longing in the soul of Ruth found daily vent in acquiring scraps of knowledge, which the widow contemptuously designated as “rubbish.”

For instance, through the good-natured indulgence of the village “Dominie” Ruth had easily kept pace with the Piggot boys in the rudimentary sciences and had far outstripped them in a tolerably well-assorted accumulation of miscellaneous reading. Her mind, clear, quick, responsive, and in full harmony with nature, expanded and developed with the gracefulness of a budding flower. She was of a joyous, sympathetic disposition, and, above all things, she was true—to herself.

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The first few years were spent in travelling through the States, from one city to another, across the great new world, whose nervous, electric spirit of restless energy infused into the young girl's receptive mind much of its ceaseless unrest and endeavor. The desire to join the great army of toilers, to be one of the pulsating throng, came to her by day and by night.

No such impulse prompted Miss Blake. A barren little patch of land on the north coast of Ireland was to her the universe, and all other regions were classed as "out." For example, the journey to America was "going *out* to the States," and a potato-rot in Killibegs was the greatest calamity that could happen to the world!

The travelling-fever having left Miss Blake as suddenly as it had taken possession of her, the erratic old lady concluded to settle down and enjoy the quiet of suburban life. Her small income, received at regular periods, allowed her sufficient means to gratify her modest desires and also enabled Ruth to continue her studies.

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She decided to rent, or perhaps to buy, a small house in the suburbs of Philadelphia, where they could obtain the tranquility of rural life combined with the educational advantages of the city.

The outcome of these conclusions was an advertisement which appeared in a daily paper, as follows:

“WANTED TO RENT, with the privilege of purchase, a small country place, furnished, having running water and old shade-trees, not far from the city.  
Address X.”

Lieutenant Arthur Waring, glancing indolently over the newspaper in his club-house, obeyed his guardian angel, fate, instinct, psychological suggestion, or whatever else it may have been, and, cutting out the little slip, enclosed it in a letter to his business agent.

“A mere suggestion,” he scribbled underneath the clipping. “I would prefer to sell ‘Graystone;’ but rather than have it go to ruin, you can rent it until I come back from Europe, which will be about this time next year.”

Then he went on his way, totally oblivious

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of the fact that the thread of his existence had become interwoven with another, more delicate and gayly colored,—a tie which the tender, merciful hand of God alone could loosen.

In response to a descriptive and glowing letter addressed to "X" by Waring's agent, Ruth and her Aunt Blake went out, one bright morning in August, to view the promised land and to inspect the property.

Commonplace and trifling are the things which mark the epochs in a lifetime; ordinary are the wayside mile-stones,—mere rough pieces of conglomerate.

The day was cool and pleasant, and, having left the car at the outskirts of the city, the two pilgrims started on foot down a shady lane towards the Mecca of their hopes and wishes,—  
"Graystone."

The sky was blue and the air redolent with the fragrance of the open fields. A few fleecy clouds were in the west. The noisy locusts were giving their shrillest notes in the overhanging trees. The lane was bordered with the dark-red cones of the sumac, the dainty white



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blossoms of queens-lace, and the yellow, gaping snap-dragons, intermingled with rank growths of rat-tails and shepherd's purse.

Great, lazy butterflies, yellow and black, fluttered indolently from one side of the lane to the other, occasionally taking longer flights into the adjoining fields of ripening corn.

Nature was in full maturity.

Ruth drew in a long and satisfying breath of the blossom-perfumed air.

"Oh! the beautiful country, the placid, innocent peacefulness of it all, the——"

Then came visions of a lovely garden in the far-off land of her infancy,—a beautiful spot, full of tangled shrubbery and singing birds,—then memories of that dear old shady lane in Warwickshire, and——

"Come, child, for goodness' sake," expostulated her aunt; "if you sit down on *every* grass hummock, we will never find the place."

Miss Blake gathered in her skirts to avoid contact with the little diamond-drops of glittering dew on the roadside grass.

"But I have already found it," murmured Ruth, dreamily.

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Miss Blake, who saw nothing but water in a running brook, turned on her sharply,—

“Ruth Martine, what *are* you talking about?”

A day-dream could no more live in the spinster's arid fancy than a water-lily could grow on a dusty turnpike.

“Contentment, auntie dear,” the girl answered, meekly, but so naturally, so sympathetically, that a red-breasted robin stopped tugging for the possession of a wriggling angle-worm, and stared at her with a side-glance of undisguised admiration.

Oh, yes, she was beautiful, this swaying, comely girl, with her great, dark eyes and exquisite form, attired in a fluffy, airy, pure-white dress of an indescribable nothingness of fashion. And as she moved along the rural by-way, in sweet accord with nature, she seemed so absolute, so complete, so perfect in every way, that—

“What she willed, to do or say,  
Seemed wisest, virtuest, discreetest, best.”

The lane farther on widened into a drab-colored, pebbly, dusty road, winding downward between high banks of tall chestnut-trees,

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which were almost smothered at their base by luxuriant growths of wild honeysuckle and creeping vines. Here the sweetbrier reared its slender vine amidst the dark foliage of a group of pines.

At the foot of the hill was an old spring-house, holding securely in its cool embrace a spring of pure, limpid water, which furnished nourishment to the three enormous buttonwood trees towering far overhead.

Beyond this the road crossed a straggling stone archway over a running brook and then passed through low meadow land. On the other slope of the meadow, almost at the top of the hill and nearly buried in foliage, its cool, gray walls reflecting the lights and shadows of that perfect August day, stood—"Graystone."

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## CHAPTER II

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*"To be wise, and eke to love,  
Is graunted scarce to God above."*

**A** SPACIOUS old-fashioned door-way opened from the front porch into the centre of the dwelling. Overhead a balcony ran along the entire front of the second story. On either side of the wide hall were large, square rooms, with massive, antique furniture and wide, deep-seated windows.

Fireplaces, under colonial mantels of quaintly-carved and white-painted wood, were in each room, and the hearth-stones, with their short, bandy-legged fire-irons, gave a sense of age and dignity to the surroundings.

There were no feminine touches evidenced by living plants or draperies. The hardwood floors, darkened by the polishings of past generations, were covered with Syrian rugs of gaily mingled colors; and a few skins of leopards and tigers lay

## Graystone

about in mathematical regularity, parallel with the straight lines of the old-time wash-boards.

Facing the front of the house was a meadow, full of great bunches of black-eyed-Susan, and golden-rod in masses. Morning-glories clambered everywhere, through the running roses, over the porch, and along the balcony. The creek, whose origin was in the secluded recesses of the tortuous Wissahickon, wound leisurely through the centre of the meadow and supplied the "running water" of the advertisement.

As for "old shade-trees,"—the grand primeval oaks in the rear, the maples and spreading chestnuts, and the cool orchard, were these not enough for any human being?

The busy rap-tap-tapping, light-hearted, red-headed wood-pecker was satisfied; and the scurrying chipmunk; and the solitary peacock sitting proudly on the top rail of the garden fence; and the yellow dots of chickens running frantically about, through the tall grass, in and out, everywhere, with the mother-hen anxious, but resolved to protect them at any hazard. They all acted as though life was very good, very enjoyable at Graystone.

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And the human beings? Ah!—that is another story.

A little colored pickaninny peaked at the two strangers from behind an iron gate of curiously wrought circles, hung on great stone posts. Her eyes gleamed like dots of china-white in a round dab of sepia, and her head was ornamented with twisted points of wiry hair, topped off with bunches of bright ribbons.

“Good-morning,” said Miss Blake, much in the tone used by visitors to the “Zoo” in front of a monkey-cage. “May we come in?”

The mistrustful brown imp looked them over suspiciously,—first at the severely prim old lady, and then at the young smiling face with the bluish-black eyes beaming on her,—and the heavy iron gate swung slowly open.

Ruth held out her hand, and a brown fist—clutching tightly the remains of a fried chicken leg—nestled there in confiding security.

“What is your name?” she questioned, naturally.

“Phyllis,” answered the brownie, as she grabbed at a fluttering butterfly with the other hand.

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"Where is your mother?" interestedly.

"Ovah dah!" exuberantly. The wild creature was dancing and skipping about like a sportive puppy, and Miss Blake kept at a safe distance.

Ruth followed the direction indicated by the onward but ever-increasing gyrations, and noticed a small cottage, standing apart and at some distance from the main building, half hidden in Virginia creepers and climbing roses.

A tidy-looking, middle-aged colored woman, her head encased in a variegated turban, stood smiling in the low whitewashed doorway.

"We understand that this place is for rent?" explained Ruth, smiling at the pickaninny, who now stood quietly at the side of her mammy; "and we would like to look through the house," she suggested.

"Shuah, honey," the woman replied, approvingly. "Jess one minute, till I git the keys." And she disappeared into her cottage.

Ruth strolled leisurely back to the deep shade of the porch where she could view with equanimity the hot noontide sun on the dusty road beyond. A dead calm had succeeded the breezy

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freshness of the morning, and the breathless quietude of the day was undisturbed save by the unceasing hum of insects, the buzzing of the flies, the droning of the bees, and the chirp of the locusts.

She did not notice that the fleecy western clouds of the early day were increasing in size, gathering in larger masses, and growing denser.

All nature seemed singing a drowsy refrain, which, like a mother's lullaby, gave her a feeling of satisfied, sleepy content.

The inspection of the house and grounds had resulted in conclusions as diverse as the natures of the two women who viewed them. For instance, the lovely shade-trees of Ruth's vision appeared to Miss Blake as so much rheumatic dampness, to be cleared away at any cost; the rippling brook suggested snakes and the Virginia creepers bats and centipedes!

Then, again, the queer, old-fashioned furniture *might* contain all sorts of wingless things too horrible to mention in a good housekeeper's hearing.

From the hall a wide, easy stairway led up to the second story. On the left was the library.



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Here the individuality of the owner and recent occupant was made manifest in a hundred different ways; for, while the second floor was under the scrupulous care of Phyllis's mammy and showed some signs of a woman's work, the first floor was merely dominated by a man of mathematical regularity.

And again, in sorrow be it said, there was nothing feminine about it.

From the rectangular ebony-cased clock, which was exactly in the middle of the mantel-piece, to the two tall Satsuma vases on each end; in the two correct pictures immediately above each vase; by the square rug, of geometric pattern, placed precisely in the centre of the floor; from a triangular table with three straight legs to the book-cases, tall and narrow, with rows of books, all classed by size and color, there was a definite and exact precision, which, strangely enough, reversed the opinions of the two visitors.

While Miss Blake looked around the library with an approving eye, remarking that she "detested things put cat-a-cornered," Ruth almost gasped at its stiffness while she sat on the

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extreme corner of one of the straight-backed colonial chairs.

"Mars Arthur's pertickler room," explained the colored woman, with an air of awesome pride. "Ef enny one comes 'nd takes the place, he sez all them things what you'ns doan't want," she continued, "I'se to take keer of till he cum's back."

"And the linen and things up-stairs?" inquired Miss Blake.

"Yes'm, all them things what you'ns doan't need," she repeated.

There was a haven of rest, however, even in the library. In one corner, under a diamond-framed casement window, was a big, well-worn leather-covered chair, and within easy reach stood a round table, with a bulging front and under cupboard, and on its top a stone jar filled with tobacco. There was also a miscellaneous collection of pipes, well-thumbed copies of "Bocace" in French, and "Hazlett" in English, with a book of verse. Over all was an odor of "my lady Nicotine," at once suggestive and reminiscent.

Ruth's roving eyes caught sight of this oasis

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in the desert of exactitude, making the discovery simultaneously with the keen nose of her aunt.

"We don't want *those* things, certainly," asserted Miss Blake, promptly.

But Ruth took up each pipe reverently, and handled the charred bowls gently, as if they were rare treasures.

Again that tall, patient figure arose in her memory, the sad longing face and kindly dark eyes. And she heard him begin,—

"Sit down, little daughter, and I'll tell you a story: There was once upon a time——"

Then her eyes filled with tears and her throat contracted, while her heart-strings vibrated painfully as she thought of her father.

"No, ma'am," said the woman, laughing. "I reckon *you* ain't got no use for them things." She dusted off the table with the corner of her blue-checked apron. "Mars Arthur, he be a great smokah. He done smoke purty much all the time, when he ain't asleep.—Whar dat chile?"

Phyllis had tip-toed around to Ruth, and,

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coming up behind, slipped her chubby, brown hand consolingly into the soft, warm, white one.

Miss Blake continued her critical examination of Graystone, and with much deliberation. The "dark corners"—bugaboos of her imagination—were illumined by the light of her countenance as they had never been before; and many a household god was dragged forth which for years had remained in veiled obscurity.

Meanwhile Ruth had taken a seat in a shaded corner of the porch and engaged in an imaginary conversation with her other self.

"I love a man who smokes a pipe," she mused. And then, realizing that this comprehensive confession would embrace nearly all the male sinners of her acquaintance, she changed her assertion to a more limited negative quantity, and added, "I mean that I don't care much for a man who does *not* smoke."

Immediately her inner consciousness set up an argument:

"A weak character, though," it suggested.

"Perhaps. But natural and lovable," she answered.

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"A selfish, disagreeable habit!" it asserted boldly.

And Ruth started,—thinking that her aunt had spoken.

"On the contrary, usually a sociable, conversation-making pastime," she expostulated.

"Prejudicial to health," it argued, gravely.

"No two doctors agree on that," she replied, triumphantly.

"Makes a man personally objectionable and unlovely," it muttered, uncharitably.

"My darling old father always smoked a pipe," she cried, reproachfully,—“and I loved him. Oh, I loved him!" she sighed.

Her glorious dark eyes closed under the long, sweeping lashes, her red lips quivered, the shadow passed away,—she smiled.

During the progress of this argument a great calm had settled over the meadow. The clouds were gathering about the tops of the tall chestnut-trees and veiling the hot, dusty road and the adjacent corn-fields in grateful shade.

The hum of insects had ceased.

A cool, refreshing breeze swept down from the west, carrying the dust and leaves along in

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scurrying, tempestuous flight. In dignified, sweeping grace the swaying branches of the trees bowed a courteous welcome to the rain-drops which came pattering among their leaves.

Lieutenant Arthur Waring then came running—in a most undignified and unmilitary fashion—along the country 'lane, through the big open gateway, and, jumping across the bed of tangled nasturtiums, landed safely on the threshold of the abode of his forefathers.

He was tall, full-grown, and lusty,—the vigorous second growth of a sturdy ancestral tree.

"I was on my way to Europe; but the steamer became disabled off Sandy Hook," he explained to his unexpected guests; "so I decided to take the one sailing on Wednesday next. Still,"—bowing invitingly to his visitors,—“that fact need not make the slightest difference in your arrangements. If you like the place, and wish to have immediate possession, I can vacate at once.”

He made a motion to replace his hat and go out into the rain, which was now coming down in a steady torrent.

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Of course he had no idea of doing anything so Quixotic. Not the least in the world!

And the possessor of the bluish-black eyes knew it. The curving upper lip bent its cupid bow into a faint smile while she looked him over; but she maliciously kept silent.

Not so the aunt.

A respectable gentleman of thirty-five or thereabouts, slightly bald, tall and aristocratic-looking, and so studiously polite, should not—in her opinion—be so carelessly turned aside. Her parched heart—of at least fifty summers—moistened and grew soft. She giggled in an unusual girlish manner, and eyed him archly as she playfully skipped between him and the door.

“Oh, you must not think of going,” she remonstrated.

And he stayed.

The rain descended in increasing force and volume. The flood-gates of heaven opened. Suddenly there was a blinding flash of lightning, which was followed instantly by a deafening peal of thunder that shook the solid stone building from cellar to garret. The windows and

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doors rattled as though Titanic hands were rolling huge boulders down the peaked roof.

Aunt Blake disappeared into a centre room, and, crouching in a corner,—the furthest removed from windows and doors,—penitently chanted from the Litany:

*"From lightning and tempest and from sudden death,*

*"Good Lord, deliver us."*

"Likewise from Aunt Blake," solemnly added the gentlemanly sinner, as he followed Ruth to the front porch.

"I am afraid you will have to stay here all night," he genially remarked.

"*Mon Dieu!* I hope not," she snapped, ungraciously.

"But you will be compelled to do so," he asserted, positively,—*"the creek is up!"*

He motioned with extended arm, and she, following the direction indicated, saw by the almost incessant lightning a whirling torrent of muddy water rushing over the archway and across the road.

The peaceful stream—which in the morning had contained scarcely sufficient water to satisfy



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a thirsty bull-frog—was now swollen far beyond its banks, and, half submerging the spring-house, was racing impetuously down the valley, evidently intoxicated by its sudden rise and importance.

“But the other way?” she demanded, imperiously.

A satisfied smile wreathed his lips.

“There is *no* other way, Miss Martine, I assure you. When the creek is up we are entirely at its mercy.”

“That is a great drawback to the place,” she complained, endeavoring to confine him strictly to business. She was uneasy under the steady, searching blue eyes, and resentful at the confident manner of the man.

“At most it is generally a question of but a few hours,” he argued, politely. “And Sallie is a capital cook. If you will comfort Miss Blake,” he continued, laughing, “I will see about dinner.” And he hurried into the darkness in the direction of the cottage.

The unwilling guests had retired to rest under Sallie’s careful attendance. Less than an hour

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afterwards the rain had ceased and the voices of the night broke forth in one continuous hymn. The moon arose in queenly splendor, and the air was heavy with a delicious, balmy perfume.

Then Sallie appeared in the library, bearing a small tray with a hall-jug of spring water and a thick blue-china bowl containing cracked ice.

"Folks all settled, Sallie?"

"Shuah, Mars Arthur."

"Disagreeable, ugly old maids," he hazarded.

"All, 'ceptin' one, Mars Arthur," she replied, wondering.

"Which one?" he innocently inquired.

"Miss Ruth. She be th' most beautifullest honey-bird I ever seen, Mars Arthur; 'nd so lovin'-like——"

"A pert, saucy school-girl!" he interrupted, with indifference.

"She done handled them pipes o' yourn like tha wus gold 'nd diamonds," she informed him, rebukingly.

"Which pipe?" with nonchalance.

"All them pipes, Mars Arthur."

She silently left the room.

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Then a curious thing occurred.

Arthur Waring took up each pipe separately, as though it were a sacred thing, and kissed each scarred and fire-eaten bowl with respectful fervor. Then he opened the cupboard of the little round table, took from it a long-necked bottle, marked "V. O. P.," and pouring some of its contents into a glass containing spring water, drank it, murmuring, "*A votre santé, ma petite.*" Adding, tenderly, "*Pas de mauvais rêve.*"

A deep calm settled over Graystone. Not a sound disturbed the peaceful serenity of its surroundings.

Waring had stepped outside, and was stealthily pacing back and forth under Ruth's window, smoking a cigar and humming softly,—

"Car vos lèvres de rose  
appellent le baiser,  
Vos belles dents d'émail  
sont faites pour croquer ;  
Vos yeux, beaux dimants,  
enchassés dans la pourpre,  
Lancent des traits aigus  
qui font deviner pourpre."

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Then he began to mutter incoherently to himself, "*Chérie*—sweetheart—*Ma petite !*"

And as he tip-toed into the house and across the hall to his room, he felt as though he had surreptitiously entered Paradise and was afraid of disturbing the angels.

From the window overhead came the sound of a musical voice :

"*Dieu merci, l'orage est passé.*"

Then another sound, akin to the harmony of rippling laughter, which might have come from the busy little brownie who presided over the fortunes of the family at Graystone.

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## CHAPTER III

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*"There grew an aged tree on the greene,  
A goodly oake, sometime bad it bene."*

**I**T was different with George Piggott. In early manhood he had married a bright, intelligent, and sensible young woman of some education.

But now in the acre of hallowed ground reposed the remains of the mother of his two boys.

Had she lived, her untiring energy and mental resources might have more successfully guided the family through the critical period following the panic of 1875.

They revered her memory and clung to their humble dwelling with a tenacity born of homely love and devotion.

The hard times continued.

The occasional jobs of carpentry and farming which the father obtained at rare intervals scarcely sufficed to provide for the increasing necessities of the boys.

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George, the oldest boy, was a broad, burly reproduction of his father, who grew apace in restless strength and energy; while the dark-haired, nervous Richard, who resembled his mother, was beginning to show long reaches of sinewy brown legs below the well-worn edges of his trousers.

The future of his sons became a daily problem with the hard-working mechanic, and each succeeding night it seemed to him more difficult of solution. The dear vine-covered cottage, with its sweet-smelling flowers, was his universe, and he wished no other.

The routine of his life consisted in long, peaceful evenings after the completion of the day's work, an occasional chat with his neighbors over the green hedges, listening to the singing of the birds and the murmuring of the brook at the edge of the garden, and then the consoling pipe of tobacco before going to bed. All of which seemed to this man of simple tastes and fixed conditions as so many balms to soothe his anxious thoughts and lull him to repose. And he also consoled himself with the thought that after death his body would lie

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beside that of his wife in consecrated ground, and hoped his soul would be with hers in heaven.

Conditions grew more distressing and the chances of earning money became rarer. The cottage, the flowers, and the murmuring brook were his; so he dreaded no landlord. But the growing boys could not live on the flowers and the brook. A daily renewal of food and a very occasional, but none the less imperative, demand for clothing had gradually but surely consumed the scanty savings.

The boys continued to grow, and the father tried harder than ever to find employment, either at his trade, as a gardener, or as a laborer. In the evenings he was so tired that he dosed over his half-smoked pipe, and endeavored to forget the everlasting problem in slumber. He would awake in the morning stiff and sore; but the first glint of sunshine through the fluttering leaves of the big oak near the cottage always found him pottering around the kitchen and ransacking the lean cupboard for breakfast.

It was his belief that it would be necessary to coax and coddle the boys into manhood. For this their mother, with her lofty ideas, was

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partly responsible ; and her parting admonition to bring both up "with good educations" was as much a mandate to him as a lady-love's request would have been to a knight of old.

The father became too indulgent, as men generally do when left in the care of children, and he brought up the boys George and Richard with the usual result.

In their natures the good and the bad developed with forced rapidity.

Like carefully-nurtured hot-house plants, they seemed to entwine their sappy natures around the sturdy father, failing to acquire the vigor of the neglected field-flower, which learns from nature the secret of bowing before the storm and recovering when it has passed over.

But the earnest part of Piggott's life was to give the boys an education—or what he called "book-learning." To this end he worked until his form became bent and his head dizzy.

Then he mortgaged the cottage and garden, with its sweet-scented flowers, the murmuring brook, and the big oak trees.

From the proceeds of this "death-grip" the boys were sent to school, where they learned



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to read and write and to figure by the rule of three. They also became more or less familiar with the public acts and the private escapades of the former kings and queens of Britain, and of the princes and princesses.

But the principle idea infused into their maturing brains was, "There's room at the top," and from looking constantly in that direction their eyes became unaccustomed to viewing the things about and beneath them.

Meanwhile, the father, who was at the bottom, continued to keep his home in order and doggedly worked on.

One day while visiting the "Blue Swan" at Leamington he saw a party of touring Americans,—loud-talking, boisterous, laughing girls and fashionably-attired men. They evidently had nothing to do but walk and talk, laugh and play, and he looked at them thoughtfully.

"Them's Hamericans," he remarked to the landlord, and he took a deep draught from his mug of ale.

"Aye," replied host.

"'Eaps o' money?" inquired Piggott, while

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his torpid brain worked valiantly with a new idea.

"Bloody 'eaps 'nd 'eaps," the landlord agreed, taking the clay pipe from his mouth, holding the bowl between his thumb and fingers, and waving the stem around in comprehensive circles.

"'Ow tha coom by hit?" demanded Piggott, wondering.

"Oh, Hamericans be all rich," replied the host, conclusively.

And then Piggott lapsed into thoughtful silence.

But the idea that possessed his mind took root and grew, as a result of which he determined to visit the boys, who were then just finishing their second year at school.

Upon the morning set for the visit he arose at the first streak of dawn. He moved cheerfully around the cottage, putting things in order with infinite care and pains. The world seemed to him brighter and he felt improved in body and mind. The vexing problem appeared to be nearing solution.

There was not much to be done. The old

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white mare had been sold long before, and Mrs. Martine—the widow who kept the little shop with the “Ginger-Beer” sign in the window—would take Sir Peter, the big black cat, until Piggott returned.

“Glory be to God, Meester Piggott, but the day be foine fur yoor joornay,” chirped the widow, as she took from him the key of his dwelling. “And you’ll be tellin’ George of th’ letter frum Ruth in America?” she went on, good-naturedly.

“That I will, Missus Martine,” he answered.

“And you’ll give one to each of th’ lads,” she added, handing him two bottles of her best ginger-beer.

“It’s too good for the likes of ’em,” he asserted, gallantly.

Taking up his bundle, he climbed over the stile and followed the path across the broad, sunny fields, which were now full of white and red sweet-smelling clover.

The morning was bright and delightful,—a rare day in June. Spacious fields of ripening grain, waving and undulating in restless dreamy motion, extended as far as the eye could see.

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Here and there were clusters of wild roses. His path led through a region of peaceful content. The very air seemed to be impregnated with prosperity and happiness.

The fat cattle and the busy bumble-bee were buried in the clover-blossoms. The thin, curling smoke was rising from the chimneys of the wayside cottages in graceful spirals. The lark was whirring upward from his feet; there was the delicious odor of green grass and flowering shrubs, the bleating of the sheep, and the twittering of the birds. It was the calm, undisturbed serenity of Nature in her gentlest mood. All of these failed to impress Piggott as he hurried briskly along the foot-path, emerging shortly into a broad highway, with six good English miles ahead of him to Leamington.

Once only did he pause, and from a slight elevation he looked into the lovely valley of his birth. Then, again, farther down the road, where a graceful stone arch spanned a tiny stream, he rested on the parapet, and his eyes lingered for a moment on the rudely cut initials "G. P.," which he had carved there in the soft stone more than fifty years before.

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The idea which possessed Piggott made him almost totally oblivious to all other sights and sensations; and it was still uppermost in his mind when he walked into the tap-room of the "Blue Swan."

"Ye told me, mon," he cautiously began to his host, "that Hamericans be all rich?"

"Aye," the host assented.

"'Nd how fur mought ut be to Hamerica?" he went on, eagerly.

Mine host was never in a hurry. He walked reflectively to the door of his low, stone-floored inn, gazed up at the fleecy clouds, just appearing in the blue sky, and then up and down the narrow cobble-stone street, before he replied, sententiously,—

"A bloody long way."

"To London 'nd beyond, noo doubt, Meester Gough?" persisted Piggott.

"Aye, 'nd beyond," repeated mine host.

"'Nd th' price of a ticket to—to——"

"London?" suggested mine host.

"Aye, to London." He had almost disclosed his idea, and the old man grew more cautious and wary. It would never do for this

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shrewd publican to know his solution of the vexatious problem which had annoyed him for so many years.

"A matter of eight bobs 'nd sixpence by th' third, Meester Piggott," calculated mine host; "'nd I'm 'oping ye woan't go beyond," he added, inquisitively.

"Trust me, trust me, Meester Gough," said Piggott, circumspectly.

Then he settled his score for the beer and cheese, walked down to the railroad station, and purchased a third-class ticket for Oxford.

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## CHAPTER IV

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*"The mouldie mosse, which thee accloieth,  
My Sinamon smell too much annoieth."*

A RIDE of about forty miles—after having stopped at Banbury, famous for its cakes, cheese, and ale—brought our inexperienced traveller to Oxford, the most important seat of intellectual development in England.

The train gliding with such frightful rapidity over hill and dale; the novelty of his surroundings; the peculiar sensation he felt when he thought of again seeing his boys, all these produced in the earnest man a degree of nervous excitement and exhilaration he had never before experienced.

"The city of dreaming spires" lay bathed in the afternoon sun of a perfect June day.

The gray walls of the University—whose twenty-one colleges are hoary by the weather-

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ings of many centuries—appeared to this one-idea man as did the sacred walls of Jerusalem to the ignorant and enthusiastic Crusader.

When in his youth he had carved the initials “G. P.” on the parapet of the old stone bridge in Warwickshire he had recorded the limit of his knowledge of letters.

Piggott could neither read nor write.

To him it was the one shadow over his otherwise blameless life. That his boys should obtain what had been denied him was his ambition. That such a course would make them perfectly happy was his conviction. That he had performed his duty would be his reward.

And now with a throbbing heart George Piggott walked slowly up High Street, almost in the shade of classic old Christ Church, on eastward past Corpus, Merton, and Magdalen, across the bridge spanning the Cherwell, at the end of the street, and still on eastward into the country beyond.

The place at which the boys were acquiring their education was a private boarding-school, of which the Reverend John Miller was the principal, and he and his estimable wife the



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joint proprietors. They were recognized as friends of the good dominie who presided over the spiritual welfare of those of the established faith who lived in Warwick and its vicinity.

It was this dominie who had recommended to Piggott the school conducted by the Millers. He had also accompanied the boys from their home to Oxford and introduced them to their learned and highly respectable teachers. Which facts explain why the supersensitive Mrs. Miller—having seen Piggott bowing and scraping on the lower step of the front porch, his face red with excitement, his voice choking with embarrassed emotion—sniffed the flower-scented air with her sharp, antiquated, and aristocratic nose, laid the copy of Kempis' "Imitation of Christ" upside down in her lap, adjusted her gold-rimmed, blue-tinted spectacles, and told him in her sweetest, Lady Bountiful manner,—

"Go around to the back door, my good man, and the housemaid will bring you something to eat."

And the old man, without a dissenting gesture, went around to the kitchen door, where

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his son George—while chasing an errant cricket-ball far out of bounds—found him, contentedly drinking from a bowl of weak tea and at intervals mopping the perspiration from his face and bald head.

There comes an occasion in every man's life when the opportunity is suddenly thrust upon him to try his mettle. The test of a man is thus applied without warning or chance of preparation. Fortunate is he who unconsciously and instantly responds with the best that is in him, and thus reveals the fibre of which he is composed, and blessed is he if that fibre should prove to be of a sterling character. Not the low-grade, instinctive courage of the swash-buckler,—a hedgehog will defend itself,—but the noble, supreme command of one's self; the invincible power to hold back the mean and selfish spirit that is apt to be in us, to throttle our passions, and to resist our temptations,—in a word, to possess true, manly courage.

Thus the opportunity came suddenly to Master George Piggott when he saw his father. Flushed and in high spirits, a winner in the game he was playing, he had rushed after the

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ball, which rolled almost to the feet of the old man.

His companions, laughing and shouting after him, awaited the return of the ball, which George had just recovered.

"Well done, lad! I wurr a runner in my time, I wurr, too," exclaimed his father, enthusiastically, as he rose to his feet. He had removed his coat, displaying a clean gray woollen shirt, the top button of which was open for comfort, exposing his hairy, sunburnt chest. The bundle which he had carried all the way from home lay on the low bench behind him,—its principal contents being the two bottles of the Widow Martine's ginger-beer for the boys. He extended his hard and calloused hand, from which the youth recoiled.

The situation flashed through the young man's mind with lightning rapidity.

This uncouth person must be presented to his flippant companions, to the refined Mrs. Miller, to the delicately organized Reverend John Miller. It must be done at once.

Master George had but an instant to decide. The test proved too severe. His courage, being

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of the lowest grade, deserted him. He turned away from the outstretched hand of his father and ran to the shouting cricket-players in the distance.

When he reached his companions he was in a state of mind not pleasant to contemplate.

The remorse that took possession of him served as an irritant rather than as a saving, penitent grace. He was angered to think that his father was the cause of it all; he was galled at the abrupt realization of a relationship which might continue for his entire lifetime, and he was incensed that his father should come so unexpectedly.

Had he written through the medium of the respectable dominie of Warwick, he could have met him at an inn, or at the railroad station in Oxford, and so have kept him in the background.

George, however, sullenly continued in the game of cricket and said nothing to his brother Richard.

Meanwhile Piggott sat on the low bench at the back door and tried to realize the full meaning of his son's actions. His mental calibre

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being of a lower order, the process was consequently slow and unfruitful. He looked in the direction the boy had taken and endeavored to follow his movements in the distance. He imagined he saw Richard, and he wondered why they did not come to him.

Then, in his simple way, he framed excuses for them: they would come as soon as the game was finished,—they were coming now.

But it was only the assistant tutor escorting a visiting American through the grounds.

“And was the University actually founded by Alfred the Great?” asked the latter.

“So it is claimed, but I think that four hundred years later would be more correct,” answered the professor. “What a brawny fellow, to be sure,” he added, glancing at Piggott as they passed by. “Now, *there* is a familiar type of our lower classes,—a genuine product of the soil, frugal and industrious. Uneducated, but none the less self-respecting and proud of his birth, I grant you,—a true Briton, in fact.” The professor smiled contentedly.

“And are those men happy, as a rule?” queried his companion.

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"Oh, perfectly so. That is evidenced by their love of home. They often remain on one little farm—father and son—from generation to generation."

The narrow-chested instructor of youth glanced approvingly in the direction of Piggott, coughed politely behind his white hand, and then they strolled on.

And so the following entry in relation to the Warwickshire man became one of the items in a note-book of his travels kept by Lieutenant Arthur Waring, late of the United States army :

"The so-called happy, contented lower classes hereabouts certainly do not express such a condition in their countenances. I saw a man to-day, and a more wistful, prematurely-aged face never before photographed itself upon my memory."

The evening shadows lengthened over the grass surrounding Miller's school. A light breeze from the eastward fluttered the leaves of the trees. The heavily-laden bumble-bee winged drowsily homeward. Lights began to twinkle and glimmer in the windows. A fleecy twilight enveloped the land.

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And still Piggott sat there alone. With the darkness came a fine, penetrating mist which obscured the view. Finally, unable longer to restrain himself, tired, desolate, and forlorn, he arose and went forth into the night.

The green hedge-rows of hawthorn bordering the highway, in daytime beautiful with blossoms and deliciously fragrant, were now but great shadowy masses dripping with moisture.

Almost insensible to his surroundings, he merely followed the road and its various windings until the station light, like a magnified halo, appeared before him.

"In twenty minutes, sor,—the mail-train for Leamington," the guard replied to the old man's question, as he bustled around among boxes and bundles. "One, third-class? Yes, sor. Any luggage? This way, sor." He was a red-faced, stocky man, with a turned-up nose, and having short whiskers extending under his chin from ear to ear.

Piggott went drifting about the station, jostling against the boxes and trunks, and in danger of getting under the horses' feet.

"For 'eaven's sake, sor!" exclaimed the

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cheery guard; "mind your way." And he piloted the dazed old man into the waiting-room, where he remained until the arrival of the train.

Getting aboard, he huddled into a corner of the coach and stared gloomily out of the window.

At Leamington he saw neither mine host of the Blue Swan nor any one else. He walked wearily along the road, passing under the spreading elms, through the sweet fields of fragrant clover, turning neither to the right nor to the left until he arrived, fagged and exhausted, at the cottage of the Widow Martine.

She afterwards told the boys that she knew something was wrong, as she hardly recognized his voice when he called for the key of his dwelling.

"He had an idea," she went on, sorrowfully, "of emigrating with you boys to America. His head was full of the idea of making money. Praise be to God, he'll need no more," she concluded.

For it had so happened, as it often does



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to men of big stature, large hearts, and sensitive natures, that Piggott died suddenly during the night.

And they found him sitting in his wide, rush-bottomed chair, at the open window, his head bent forward, his thick, horny fingers clasped peacefully together, with Sir Peter, the black tom-cat, curled up at his feet, tranquilly asleep.

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## CHAPTER V

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*“Most of all burdens, that a man can beare,  
Most is a fooles talke to beare and to beare.”*

**I**N accordance with the law, young George Piggott assumed control of all the property of which his father had died possessed, and he did not hesitate to sell it at once, and appropriate the proceeds for his own personal use.

He was now a tall, robust youth, approaching twenty-one years of age, and he lost no time in idle regret, but at once endeavored to solve the problem which had vexed his father to death. His character at this period of his life is a difficult one to portray, being entirely at variance with the good boys of the moral story-books, who always become rich and prosperous.

He would do nothing wicked if the chances of being found out were too great to be easily overcome.

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He would not steal, because he had a coward's respect for the long arm of the law; nor would he cheat at games if he feared detection.

By nature sensual, he took no pleasure in low intrigues, but had romantic day-dreams of higher and more difficult conquests.

Above all, he craved power, and was willing to work laboriously in his own way to attain position. He had generous impulses when anything remained over and above his own needs. In religious matters he was passive. The great truths of Christianity were suspended in his mind like heavy clouds surcharged with electricity,—dangerous and subtle and perilous to antagonize.

Moreover, he had a certain tenacity of purpose, a fairly good will-power, a mysterious method of guiding people his way, as a hidden undertow will draw a bather unconsciously out to sea. But, with it all, he had an apparently frank, manly, ingenuous laugh, a cordial grip of the hand, and a pair of seemingly innocent blue eyes, which served, like some stained-glass windows, to hide the ugliness on the other side.

To such a character the narrow, crowded

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avenues of his native land furnished small room for development. His father's idea had blossomed, and the seed had fallen on fertile soil. The fever of emigration possessed him, and to the States he turned his longing eyes.

Among the passengers on the steamer "Pennsylvania" — communicative, agreeable, and friendly—was young George Piggott. His pockets were lined with good English sovereigns, the proceeds of the sale of his father's property, and his thoughts were about equally divided between remorse for leaving his brother Richard to shift for himself and the glorious future which he felt sure awaited him in the United States.

The causes which bring two human beings together are no doubt the same as those which direct the movements of ants, the flight of birds, the wanderings of wild beasts, the gathering of clouds, or a collision in mid-ocean. We call it Fate.

And so Fate decided that Lieutenant Arthur Waring should take passage on the same steamer and be assigned to the same state-room as young George Piggott.

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Waring was a man with a beaming smile and a brierwood pipe,—the first for the general public, the second for personal use.

The dimly lighted state-room was illumined by his presence.

“Good-morning, Mr. Piggott,” he began, sociably. “The agent mentioned your name to me. Mine is Waring.” He shoved a flat case under the berth and various other impedimenta into the different corners of the cabin. “I am going back to old ‘Billy Penn,’—Philadelphia, you know,—and I am glad of it. You are going to——?”

“New York,” completed George, with guarded dignity. He had been warned against strange Americans ; but this one seemed so natural and innocent.

“Busy place,” affirmed Waring. “Most Englishmen seem to prefer it to our other towns,” he went on, lightly.

“Yes ; I prefer New York, of course,” replied George, with a slight drawl, as a check on too much familiarity.

“Why ?” the lieutenant asked, wondering.

“Well—” with hesitation, “it’s larger, you know——”

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"Certainly; so is Africa," the American retorted, laughing. Noting the other flushing, he added, "But, really, New York is a small part of the United States; there are so many other large cities, and there is so much open country besides——"

Waring abruptly ended the conversation and went up on deck.

One morning in the smoking-room the subject of conversation was the Civil War in the United States.

"It was only natural that *we* should side with the aristocracy of the South," asserted George Piggott.

"Why?" asked Waring, who had just entered the room.

"Well, because our commercial interests were so great," George replied.

There were two other passengers in the smoking-room,—a fat, elderly man in plain black clothes and a young Irish priest with a jovial countenance and a hearty laugh. They were assenting pacifically to all that young George was saying.

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"The North had no right, you know, to blockade the Southern ports and stop our imports of cotton," continued George.

A bottle of whiskey and a siphon of soda stood on the table about which the three men were seated, and these were passed around at frequent intervals. Under their stimulating influence young George's mind became turbulent.

"It was a damned outrage," he proclaimed, vigorously.

"That depends, of course, upon whose ox is gored," Father Fallon, the amiable priest, observed, good-naturedly.

The elderly man, had introduced himself as Mr. Brown. He was a benevolent-looking individual, having a bald head and a boyish face—an effect produced by an indecisive small mouth and a wavering lower lip. He had suggested that the Trent affair was different. And Waring imagined that he was an American, when he said,—

"Yes, the English got Mason and Slidell and *we* kept the cotton."

"International law was with the English side,

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as I understand it," said Father Fallon, slowly filling his glass.

"A law which England never observed," the lieutenant retorted.

"Let's have a fresh cigar," interposed Mr. Brown, moving towards the electric button.— "And, steward," he hospitably added, as that individual appeared, "bring us a quart of the 'Widow.'—With *me*, gentlemen."

Waring now felt sure that Mr. Brown was an American.

Young George was feeling exceedingly comfortable, and, as a consequence of his unaccustomed indulgence in liquors and strong cigars, he began to enlarge on matters relating purely to his past life and future prospects.

The older men listened with amused interest while he explained in detail his idea of how far a man could go with safety in that almost universal pursuit of money.

"Money is what I am after," he concluded.

"And yet there are many things that money will not buy," remarked Waring, tritely.

The priest gave an approving nod. "Health and happiness, primarily," he observed.



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"It will buy power, though, and *that* is everything," asserted the youth.

The lieutenant regarded young George with interest through the smoke of his brierwood pipe, then he said, gravely,—

"Why do you crave power? It is a perilous thing, after all, and beset with many difficulties. There are lots of things more desirable than money or power, and they can be gotten easier."

"Easy things are no good," young George expostulated, wildly. "Give me a good hard proposition, full of ginger and difficulties. Then I just square myself and go at it. Peril and trouble are my meat," he proudly proclaimed.

The others exchanged glances.

"What's one man's meat is another man's poison," the priest then said, quaintly. "In seeking money and power regardless of peril and trouble, and, I may add, unmindful of the rights of others, a man might sometimes commit a sin."

"You don't suppose I mean to get money dishonestly?" protested George, hotly.

The priest laughed, raised his open hand in a conciliatory way, and said,—

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"Bless you, no ! I merely desired to carry on the thought expressed by our friend Waring, that the pursuit of money and power, regardless of any nobler aim, is apt to be followed by dangerous consequences in this world and the next."

"As for the next world," said Mr. Brown, sitting back comfortably in the cushions and emitting great wreaths of smoke from his cigar ; "that reminds me of the nigger, when the Quaker farmer caught him in his hen-roost." And he chuckled, reminiscently.

The other men became interested.

"You may have heard the story before ?" he inquired.

They denied all previous knowledge of it.

And Mr. Brown continued : "The Quaker warned the darkey of the punishment awaiting his soul in the next world if he persisted in robbing hen-roosts——"

"Another drink ?" interrupted young George, sociably.

"Thanks, no." Mr. Brown's fat hand covered his glass as the young man waved the bottle wildly. Then he gave another mirthful chuckle,

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and resumed. "The nigger, trembling with fright, said, 'Ef you put down your gun, Mars Henry, 'nd lemme go in dis world, I'll take my chances in de next.'"

"He was bloody right," George vociferated, taking another sip of the whiskey and soda and a fresh cigar from a number which Mr. Brown had liberally placed upon the table. It charmed him to be in the company of these men of the world; but there was a buzzing in his head and a ringing in his ears that was novel and exciting. He crossed his legs and tried to appear as if wine, liquor, cigars, and animated conversation were all familiar things to him. It required some effort on his part to avoid singing sentimental songs and to keep from winking in a maudlin way at Father Fallon from behind the lieutenant's back. He experienced a fullness of contentment, well-being, and Scotch whiskey, and felt an overpowering desire to talk about himself.

"I pity the poor beggars who have to go down, of course," he said, compassionately; "but, having been used to money all my life, I naturally recognize its power."

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Mr. Brown again reached for the electric button.

"Another bottle of the 'Widow'?" he genially persisted.

"No, no, Brown. I've had enough. My father told me always to drink like a gentleman," the youth protested.

Mr. Brown then proffered him a cigar.

Young George accepted, and, biting off the wrong end, tried to light the other.

"Thanks," he murmured; "I really haven't smoked a good cigar since leaving Warwickshire. My father imported his own stock of cigars, you know." He felt his already flaming cheeks getting a shade redder.

Waring became suddenly interested.

"You lived in Warwickshire, then?" he asked George.

"Oh, yes; not far from Leamington. I inherited my father's estate," he casually added.

Mr. Brown seemed more respectful.

"A lovely part of England," remarked Waring, enthusiastically. "I wished particularly to see it on this trip, but had time only for Oxford.

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A place associated with the work and lives of Shakespeare and the author of 'Hudibras'—with Miss Mulock and George Eliot—would be to me far more interesting than a hundred stock exchanges or bourses."

A pair of searching blue-black eyes, with long, sweeping lashes, appeared to him through the smoke from his pipe.

"You old fraud," they seemed to say, reproachfully.

And *then* Waring spoke of Ruth Martine: "She was the daughter of a widow in Ashborne, I believe, who was not very well off in this world's goods."

George was suddenly startled. The whirling motion of things in general and the ringing in his ears continued without his volition. The uncomfortable flushing of his face was intensified by a creepy tightness of the scalp. His feet grew icy cold.

Waring's remarks had awakened in George's mind a remembrance of his old sweetheart.

He took another sip of the whiskey, drew a long breath, and began calculating his chances of being found out if he lied about her. He

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leaned back in his seat and flicked the ashes from his cigar, while he repeated the well-known name.

"Martine, Martine," he mused. "I don't remember any family by that name in Warwickshire. They may be poor people whom I would not be likely to meet," he added, with careless indifference.

"*Que, j'espère,*" muttered the lieutenant, devoutly, while he emptied the bowl of his briarwood pipe and abruptly left the room.

Father Fallon tossed his cigar through the open door and followed Waring below.

Young George, being now alone with Mr. Brown, realized that there was something annoying to him in the other's manner.

He tried to stand on his feet, and became conscious of the fact that his companion was watching him make the effort. Then he sat upright in his chair, in a more dignified manner, while Mr. Brown continued to watch him with exasperating coolness.

"I am seldom mistaken in a man," Mr. Brown said, finally, in a calculating, hesitating way. "I first thought—but no matter. I be-

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lieve *we* can make a good deal of money—you and I.” And he chuckled softly.

George looked unsteadily at the broad, smiling face, with its whimsical, wavy underlip, and he squirmed under the thought of the implied partnership.

“For instance,” explained Mr. Brown, as he produced a pack of playing-cards, “a fellow can pick up quite a snug sum with these things—and a partner.”

George wriggled in his seat.

“No danger, you know,—always between gentlemen,—no one ever kicks.” He smiled, reassuringly.

George rose to his feet. He felt compromised. Still, there is a good chance, a safe possibility, he thought.

He bowed with drunken gravity to his companion.

“I don’t *quite* like the idea,” he temporized. And Mr. Brown was satisfied.

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## CHAPTER VI

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*"Ab, deare Lord! and sweet Saint Charitee!  
That some goode body woulde once pitie mee!"*

THE old English custom that allowed young George Piggott to take possession of all the property left by his father likewise prescribed that his brother Richard should have nothing.

Richard was now almost entirely alone in the world. All of his personal property was contained in an old black leather bag.

He had accepted the temporary shelter offered to him by the good Widow Martine, and now occupied a small room in her humble dwelling.

For months he tried to obtain a clerical position, but no one seemed to need the services of a young man of his educational acquirements. The "room at the top" was uncomfortably full, and he could not get even a narrow foothold on the elevated structure which the



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refined and polished Millers had pictured to him as his future abiding-place and sphere of usefulness.

It was somewhat of a shock to his eager and restive ambition to find that his carefully-worded and grammatical letters, written in a neat business style, received but scant acknowledgment from the busy commercial houses to which they were addressed.

By way of compensation he did odd jobs around the garden and shop of the Widow Martine, who from her overflowing heart gave him much homely advice and comfort.

Like many others of limited education, this good creature had an instinctive knowledge of human nature amounting almost to prophetic vision, and Richard's sincerity appeared to her as manifest as the noonday sun.

"Ye'll not be wantin' wooruk long, me lad," she would say, with encouragement; "it's th' willin' horse that gets th' lood."

And in the evenings, when he drew a stool near the table upon which stood a single candle and by reading tried to forget his loneliness, Mrs. Martine, knitting, would look at him over

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her glasses, and say, "He's a good lad: when he's not fishin', he's mendin' his nets."

With all his honesty and willingness, Richard had a proud and rebellious spirit. He cursed the fate which tossed him like a sprat into the ocean of oblivion,—he who longed to be a hero in the strife. Then, far into the night, when all was quiet, he would sit by the little peaked window, with both elbows on the sill, and, pipe in mouth, gaze out into the small garden, enclosed in its rough stone walls, thinking, thinking, thinking. It was the same old, everlasting problem, the identical question asked of their task-masters by the children of Israel in the land of Egypt:

"For how shall we make bricks without straw?"

If some one would start him, even in a modest way, he felt sure he had enough ability to continue. But to whom should he apply? He recalled a few of his acquaintances,—the Widow Martine; Mr. Gough, the landlord of the Blue Swan; the dominie; the Millers; his brother George. Why not write to George?

They had parted indifferently, the older in a

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hurry to be off, and Richard with injured feelings and gloomy sensitiveness.

Richard realized that he must curb all tender, morbid feelings. They made him unhappy and he appeared disagreeable to others. What right had he to feel neglected if George took all and sailed away, leaving him alone? Surely it was his birthright. No, the fault certainly was his own in not writing to George sooner. How could his brother be expected to know of his sufferings and misery unless he were told of them?

So he suppressed his feelings and bared his heart in a letter to his older brother.

Richard was a remarkable young man. The classic lines of his broad, high forehead; the wide-apart gray eyes and straight nose; the comparatively short upper lip and firm mouth, supported by a square, resolute chin, indicated a nervous courage and steadiness of purpose. In stature he was slightly above the average; his broad, deep chest and shoulders and his compact, muscular legs and body seemed fitted for unlimited energy and endurance.

His mind, having once arrived at a definite

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conclusion,—though reached by the most laborious methods of reasoning,—was finally inflexible and decisive. His will-power, once aroused to action, became dogged and persevering to the end. It seems difficult to reconcile such traits of character with a nature so gentle and loving as to be almost feminine. The crying of a child, the terror of a wounded bird, the torture of a hooked fish, or the fright of an ensnared animal, all such things appealed to his compassionate heart with a force akin to personal pain.

To him came this letter from his brother George :

“ I am surprised that you should ask me for money, knowing, as you do, how little I have for myself. You will have to work out your own salvation, as I am doing, and stop begging others for assistance.”

There was a twitching of the sensitive mouth and a pang in the throbbing heart of the lonely boy as the full significance of these lines was slowly and painfully impressed on the tender tissues of his brain. He gasped slightly and bravely forced back an indignant, nervous sob.

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Then a grateful physical reaction ensued, the pain ceased, and the life blood coursed as freely as before.

Not entirely as before.

The perfectly homogeneous steel blade will break if bent with a sudden force beyond its power of resistance ; while the less finely finished metal, if its fibres are strained and crushed, will spring back, but not to its original straightness.

In many persons these variations will often pass unnoticed. A proud nature will conceal the alteration with an assumed careless indifference ; but when disintegration has once commenced, each succeeding blow makes concealment more difficult.

Richard gave a short, derisive laugh and tore the letter in pieces.

"What does he think I am?" he muttered, contemptuously,—“a beggar, a tramp? Ah, God in heaven, a tramp—a tramp!”

A sudden weakness overcame him, and he burst into tears.

Upon the same evening he surprised the Widow Martine by impulsively throwing his

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arms about her neck and kissing her on both cheeks. After which he went to his room, packed into the old leather bag his few personal belongings, and, when he thought she was asleep, crept softly down the stairs and passed out upon the moonlit fields.

There is no glory in a tramp's life, no happiness, no glamour or romance of any kind. Many writers have made earnest efforts to cast a rosy halo around the dust-begrimed "knight of the road," but nevertheless the unfortunate individual gradually sinks lower and lower into the abyss of wretchedness.

For a brief period Richard Piggott was perforce a tramp.

Every door of honest employment was for a time closed against him ; the efforts which he made to stop his zig-zag course on the slippery down grade were of no avail. When almost in despair, and broken in heart and spirit, he found himself with pick in hand, stripped to the waist, in a subterranean temperature of tropical heat,—digging coal in an English mine.

It was here, however, that he learned the

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blessed uses of adversity. No better training could he have obtained to fit him for the man's part which he was destined to play thereafter.

At this time Fate came to him in the guise of a beautiful woman.

She was cunning and treacherous, deceitful and scheming; she had an enticing form, a graceful carriage, an apparent modesty, and an assumed sympathy which completely won the lonely young fellow's heart, and he married her.

For a very short time all went well. This woman had singled him out from among his fellow-workmen as a man of superior intelligence, and it flattered her vanity to find that in his desolation he clung to her above all others. She might have fostered this first love into a life growth of strenuous permanency; but she was not capable of understanding its value. The very ardor and overflowing fullness of his tender heart surfeited and cloyed her frivolous nature. She was satiated with his constant attention, his persistent devotion, and his untiring care. Accustomed, as she had been, to a more or less exciting life of unhealthy episodes, this rank growth of an English lodging-house,

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matured on such mental nourishment as is usually found in the froth of a circulating library, Beatrice Genevieve—for such her fond mother had hopefully named her—became lazy, indolent, and quarrelsome. She was a woman who believed herself to be superior to those in her own station of life, and at first it had seemed to her as though the romance of her existence had found its beatific, glorious crown of happiness in marriage. All the “perfectly lovely” books which she had read ended that way; and to read it in a book—any book—was to her immature mind sufficient proof of its truth.

It was natural therefore for Beatrice to seek the conclusion of her romance in marriage.

But, unfortunately, her views of life were obscured by her ignorance of its proprieties, and she longed, with a grumbling spitefulness, for the pleasures and luxuries which ever appeared with tantalizing variations as a mirage in the desert of her quiet, humdrum career.

When she became disagreeable and irritable, the generous, unselfish Richard assumed a passive and considerate manner. He taxed himself with remorse when a hasty rebuke unguardedly



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passed his lips, and with repentance for faults of which his gentle nature was innocent. To him she was a beautiful woman, and he loved her. The disguise was perfect ; he did not suspect the devil that was in her.

Then came a blow which closed his heart against her forever. He arrived at his home one day only to find it desolate, and his wife, dreaming over a second romantic love, in the arms of another.

To a nature weaker than Richard Piggott's such an experience would have proven fatal. Under such circumstances there is a tendency among men of a coarser mould to rush headlong into extravagant excesses and ruin.

Richard did nothing of the kind.

A short time afterwards we find him crossing the ocean in company with a small party of emigrants, bound for the coal regions of Pennsylvania.

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## CHAPTER VII

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*"So often times, when good is meant,  
Evil ensueth of wrong intent."*

**R**UTH MARTINE and her aunt, Miss Blake, had occupied Graystone for nearly a year, and their lease on the property would soon expire.

The sweet, calm days of early autumn were throwing their mellow radiance over field and garden. Nature was touching here and there the leaves of the sumac with vivid tints of bright scarlet and enveloping all the landscape in a thin veiling of golden haze.

Ruth had made some wonderful changes in the interior arrangement of the angular old house. Her mere presence acted like a sun-beam, penetrating into the recesses of its gray walls. It seemed as if some fairy had touched the antique furniture with an enchanted wand, giving to each piece a separate and delightful

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individuality, and had breathed over all an air of gracious hospitality, which charmed the unwary visitors and lulled them into forgetful repose.

In the wide front hall were clusters of living ferns and broad-leaved plants, the care of which afforded her much pleasure. Heavy portières, of rich, warm coloring, hung in the doorways of the big square rooms; while on the white wooden mantels were quaint pieces of blue china.

In the library the change wrought by her sweet feminine presence was more strikingly manifested.

The square rug, turned from the parallel position in which it had formerly been placed, was now thrown carelessly across a corner, in such apparent neglect as would have captivated the heart of old Ben Jonson. On one end of it stood the triangular table, in aristocratic slenderness, holding on its polished surface some of the larger volumes of engravings, which the imperious Ruth had commanded to come down from their lines of military precision in the tall bookcases.

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Upon one of these ponderous books she placed her dainty sewing-basket.

The small round table with the bulging front and the old leather-covered chair within reach of the pipes and tobacco-jar still remained in the corner, with the simple addition of a bowl of trailing, gaily-colored nasturtiums.

Ruth, with her dreamy, softly rounded chin nestling deep in her shapely brown hand, gazed wistfully out of the open window into the golden dreamland of a September afternoon. At lengthening intervals she would sew diligently on the white stuff which she held in her lap,—a few more stitches in an endless hem.

And thus Lieutenant Arthur Waring found her, a rosy tint on each brown cheek, her expressive mouth, showing faultlessly white teeth and a lurking gravity, her wavy, dark-brown hair in graceful curves about her glorious head, and her eyes—laughing, teasing, wide-open, astonished eyes—looking straight into his.

He stood in the door-way, having just returned from Europe, a year older, but not a whit the wiser. With him came an air of

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breezy freshness, a genial frankness of manner, a physical healthfulness which seemed to have avoided contact with evil things.

It appeared as if she had known him all her life, and she felt a sudden impulse to fill his pipe and run for his slippers.

But she merely arose, and, allowing him to touch the tips of her fingers, remarked,—

“I am delighted to see you. I will call Auntie Blake.” And as she floated airily out of the library, the crimson, life-giving sun was disappearing in a halo of glory behind the distant hills.

With a sigh of content, Waring sank into the comforting depths of his old easy-chair and instinctively laid hands on the book nearest to him. He read :

“There is a garden in her face,  
Where roses and white lilies show ;  
A heavenly paradise is that place,  
Wherein all pleasant fruits do grow.  
There cherries hang that none may buy,  
Till cherries ripe themselves do cry.”

“Where, under the blessed canopy,” he exclaimed, softly “did she resurrect *you* from !”

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“These cherries fairly do enclose  
Of Orient pearls a double row,  
Which when her lovely laughter shows,  
They look like rosebuds filled with snow.”

He buried his face in the pages, and——

Does a young woman know when a man is interested in her? Possibly not, for if that were so, Ruth would never have permitted the remarkable arrangement which her aunt and Lieutenant Waring were now discussing.

“I shall be very glad to let you have the house rent free,” she heard him say, “if you will permit me to occupy but one room.”

And Miss Blake, for obvious reasons, replied that such an offer would be quite acceptable to Ruth and herself.

And so Waring and Ruth saw much of each other during the succeeding fall and winter months; and the more he observed her the less comfort he obtained from his favorite cynical authors and the greater pleasure he experienced in the old ballad-singers, whose thoughts came freely in natural melody, gushing forth from the fountain-head of inspired genius. He frequently ceased all reading, and sat with bended

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head and dreaming eyes, gazing into the flickering light of the fire.

How could this young girl ever regard a man of his years? he would think. She could be as a daughter to him, no doubt; but somehow he had no desire for such relationship. After all, was seventeen years such a tremendous difference? Many times during the past year had he tried to assure himself that he was still a young man; but the gray hairs of his moustache and the thin covering on top of his benign head held his past life in evidence. The very geniality of his manner, the kind and courteous inclination of his benevolent head, and the store of knowledge which it contained, only accentuated each one of his thirty-six years. He appeared to be older than he really was.

This deceptive mellow grayness, this full ripeness of manhood, first attracted Ruth Martine towards him, and she almost insensibly began to respect, then to admire, and finally to wish for him.

In his society she imbibed pure draughts of wisdom and common sense. He could quote

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from the writings of almost any author of repute, and no subject was too complex for him to explain. His elucidations were so simply, so naturally given that they became conversations, and not demonstrations, in which she found herself taking a delightful, active part.

He never spoke to her of love, so her reserved, shy nature expanded in safety, entwining its delicate tendrils around his heart in loyal, devoted friendship.

One bleak March evening, after dinner, they sat together in the library, before a blazing wood-fire. A cold and penetrating rain splashed against the window in the outer darkness, but within the wood flamed cheerfully on the dogs of the hearthstone. Those mute, sly-looking old dogs, having the accumulated wisdom of a century and more in their metal fibres.

What tales they could tell!

The firelight alone illuminated the room. The sunny, dark complexion of the lovely girl, lighted by the subdued yellow blaze, was full of beauty. Around them, reflecting the dancing flames, were the tall bookcases, replete with



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garnered lore ; and the old family paintings from their dim obscurity looked down with condescending affability.

These two wise heads were on very good terms with themselves, and they had confidence in each other.

"After all, is it not better so?" he began. He was seated in the old easy-chair, while she sat on a low stool at his feet, and nearer the fire. "Does not a man wish for a woman into whose heart he can pour his secret woes, his hopes and aspirations, his likes and dislikes ; one in whom he may find a soothing, responsive, intelligence, a sweet accord, a blissful rest?"

"And does not a woman ever crave the friendship of a man," she responded, bravely ; "one in whom she can entirely trust, to whom she can confide her ignorance of life, her wavering yearnings after the good ; to whom she can reveal her innermost heart in confident security?"

"It is so much better than mere love," he confidently assured her. "That selfish, engrossing, heart-breaking passion !" He waxed warm and eloquent as he looked into the dangerous depths of the black eyes beside him. "Ah,

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dear Lord, what scarlet sins have been committed under the name of love!" he added, with much vehemence.

"And yet," she inquired, "they say there is no friendship without love?"

"But there is love without friendship," he asserted, dogmatically, and then went on to explain: "We have no word in our cold, harsh English to describe it."

The chair and the stool came closer together.

"The word *friendship*, with its polished urbanity, expresses it no better than *love*, with its boorish, distempered jealousy. The French have a word—*camaraderie*—which comes somewhere between the two; but no word will ever perfectly define it, no poet will ever truly express it. It remains now as it has always been,—intangible, elusive, the sport of critics, a target for ridicule, the spoil of the vile, and the hope of the good. It exists," he concluded, mournfully, "but it cannot be named."

They were now quite close together. The rosy red firelight shone on both their faces, one upturned expectantly, the other looking down tenderly.

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"I was just twenty-one," he went on, "when chance took me to Belgium. For a young man I was decidedly blasé. Two years in the army during the Civil War, and two years abroad after its close, in the vain attempt to ascertain what I was good for, finally gave me a perfectly correct idea,—nothing. And so, drifting aimlessly, sketching a little, observing much, I stumbled on the ruins of the old Abbey of Villers-la-Ville——"

"Oh, that's the very——" interrupted Ruth. She stopped suddenly, her curiosity aroused. "Did I ever tell you where I was born?" she then quietly asked.

"England, I always supposed," he replied.

"And you were saying?" she led him on, gently.

"You have seen pictures of it, no doubt," he resumed; "they are very common; but none give a true idea of the grand old abbey, which rang with the impassioned appeals of Peter the Hermit, preaching the first Crusade.

"It was a lovely afternoon in June when the train from Brussels dropped myself and my trunk unceremoniously on the wayside station

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platform, and then scurried off down the line, tooting a reed-like little whistle, for all the world like a spectacular entrance and exit in the mechanical setting of a pastoral comedy. Their railroads seemed so diminutive when compared with ours.

"I was in the midst of broad grain-fields, through which a narrow, winding lane led down towards a red-roofed hamlet in the distance.

"A solitary individual in a blue blouse touched the peak of his cap, placed my trunk upon his broad right shoulder, and guided me down the green lane and through the sunlit fields.

"It was charming to see those *paysannes*, in their short skirts, bowing, and saying, '*Bon soir, m'sieu,*' their white teeth gleaming between healthy rosy lips.

"We walked about a mile, stopping before an old stone building, which, judging by the ruins of an ancient water-wheel in the yard adjoining, had evidently been at one time occupied as a mill. It was one story in height, and seemed in its cool, gray quietness, to have settled down from a very active mill of former days to a peaceful and moss-gathering old age.

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"I waited outside in the warm afternoon sun for a few moments, when my guide, returning from the interior, bowed politely, and again picking up my trunk, led the way into a cool square room, just off the main hall-way.

"The floor was of smooth slabs of stone and the furniture of the most simple kind ; but clean white muslin curtains at the one deep casement window gave a sense of coolness and rest, which in my worn-out condition of mind and body was refreshing and grateful.

"In front of the old inn were several enormous linden-trees, under whose branching shade stood a large stone table, with wooden benches on either side.

"Around this venerable table we would gather in the soft, delicious twilight,—mine host and hostess, their sons and daughters,—drinking from our mugs of *bier blanche*, the men smoking long-stemmed pipes, in blissful quiet and contentment.

"It was here one evening that the occupants of a cottage across the way joined our congenial circle, and with them came a little girl,—I never knew her name,—whose lustrous dark

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eyes so entered my soul that I have since wandered around the world in the vain hope of again seeing them."

Waring had slipped from the big leather-covered chair to the soft Persian rug at Ruth's feet, and was looking up into her face.

The dancing firelight caressed them.

"She could not have been more than five or six years old," he recklessly continued; "but the thought possessed me that when I looked into her eyes I beheld a lovely *soul*, years older than the winsome, childlike body; and the soul seemed to meet mine and rejoice in the reunion, as if our spirits had known each other ages before."

The fire was burning low. The last particularly hard knot of a tough old log emitted fitful jets of long-imprisoned gases, accompanied by curling spirals of smoke. Beneath, the embers were glowing with a steady, latent heat.

"I have never seen anything like them until——"

Ruth's dark liquid eyes melted tenderly towards him, and her curved upper lip parted slightly, as if smiling a gracious, alluring assent.

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Ah, robust, irresistible *love*, how strong you are! And you poor counterfeits of mystic, psychological, and undefinable *friendship*, of feeling and affinity, of cold, silvery-white generalities, how miserably weak!

His arms were about her, and his lips sought hers in a passionate kiss.

"Until I met you, dearest," he gently whispered.

The shining, wicked old fire dogs seemed to blink and wink at each other in the unsteady glare of the dying fire. The crackling, blackened, remnants of logs fell into the fast accumulating gray ashes. The chaste, rectangular, ebony-cased clock on the mantel-piece rang with shrill distinct notes twelve virtuous strokes.

And the day was done.

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## CHAPTER VIII

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*"And he that strives to touch a starre  
Oft stumbles at a strawe."*

**A**T the instant one day is ended another day begins. The following morning, sharp and cold, found Ruth in a condition bordering on desperation. In the brightness of the March sunlight the events of the preceding night stood forth in bold, hard lines, unrelieved by the softening and mitigating surroundings attending a wood-fire on a stormy night. The remorseful little creature shrank deeper into the snow-white coverings of her bed, and in their secure depths tried to ease her mind. Certain events of the previous night seemed unaccountable, and she experienced a feeling of guilt when she thought of them. Her pure friendship theory, conceived in innocence and practised in all sincerity, had worked smoothly enough up to a certain point, and



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had then collapsed so suddenly that she became dazed and overcome by a more painful sense of her wickedness. From childhood she had endeavored to take a superior part in the struggle for existence.

Her ideals were pure, strong, and brave, and during her short life she had tried to maintain the spirit of the Divine Word. With this object in view she had eagerly imbibed the teachings of the good dominie in Warwickshire. For the sake of the opportunities that might be afforded she had accompanied her Aunt Blake on her travels; and for further improvement she had assiduously tried to cultivate the good will and opinion of a thoroughly educated man of the world, and he had brought her to grief.

How the snow-white pinions of her soaring ambition seemed soiled and bedraggled! How foully the spots appeared on their former immaculate loveliness!

What would Waring think of her? The suspicion crossed her mind that the story which he told, leading up to the unfortunate climax, was merely a clever *ruse de guerre* to cover a bold attack. But in the depths of her pure

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heart she felt that such was not the case. A brief moment of reflection assured her that Arthur Waring was sincere, and this conclusion gave her a ray of comfort. But despite the fact that she admired and respected him, she realized that he was not the prince who was to come and awaken her heart to unconditional surrender. In the reflex light of her quickened senses the image of George Piggott, her first love, stood plainly before her, and she measured the depth of her fall from grace by the density of the oblivion into which his person had faded.

Poor George !

She would write and express her forgiveness of him, although unasked, for his being within a hundred miles of her and failing to communicate with or visit her since his arrival in New York the preceding August.

Miss Blake and the Widow Martine had kept up an occasional correspondence, and the letters from Warwickshire contained accounts of the young man's movements up to the day he sailed.

Then the pendulum of her mind swung back to the other extreme. Where was George

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Piggott? Why had he neglected her so shamefully?

The questions suggested an object on which to vent her indignation, and they relieved her pent-up emotions considerably. Why was he not with her, and so have possibly prevented his little "Sweetbrier" from making such a fool of herself? It was all his fault; and it served him right, too.

"So there!" she exclaimed, finally.

The black eyes flashed ominously from beneath the wealth of dark-brown hair, now spread in wavy curves over the white pillow.

It was well for George that he was not there.

And, as her irritation increased, her inexorable self pointed the finger of scorn with cruel severity, and seemed to say, reproachfully,—

"A nice experience for you, Ruth."

This fair aspirant after the good and beautiful tossed on her pillow in feverish unrest. A sense of her ridiculous failure to accomplish her desires enveloped and paralyzed her faculties, enervating her powers of moral resistance and almost overthrowing penitence itself.

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A delicious, languorous memory—deadly as the violet-scented white damp of the mines—overcame her senses, and half-consciously she listened to the words of the tempter :

“This is a very comfortable dwelling-place. The surroundings are beautiful and the prospect pleasing. The family of Waring is an old and honorable one. Arthur Waring has enough of this world’s goods. Cease chasing the rainbow of endeavor. Rest here in forgetful idleness and you will find pleasure in luxurious ease.”

“But I don’t love him,” she feebly remonstrated.

“Pshaw ! what is love ?” argued the tempter. “It is but a mere expression of passion. And, even though you do not love him in your ideal fashion, you can enjoy——”

“Ah, dear God ! *No !*” she gasped, as if awakening from troubled sleep.

And, behold, the devil left her, and ministering angels came, filling her mind with pure thoughts ; and the clouds of sham and weakness were dispelled in their radiant presence.

So it has been since Ann, Bel, and Ea fought and destroyed Tiamat, the she-dragon of chaos,

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with all her monstrous offspring, and took from her the books of destiny. It is the same great dragon—called the Devil and Satan—who was cast out of heaven by a just God, and who still tries to deceive the whole world. The good prevails unto the present day, and will continue to prevail through all eternity, and the wicked shall be destroyed.

Ruth now smilingly faced the glorious sun, whose rays tinged her dark brown hair with threads of burnished gold, adding one more charm to its glossy beauty. Then arising from her bed and enveloping her lithesome form in a soft robe-de-chambre, she took from the shelf over the mantel her favorite copy of “Gesta Romanorum,” and read,—

“There was a celebrated magician, who had a very beautiful garden in which grew flowers of the most fragrant perfume, and fruits of the most delicious flavor. In short, nothing on earth could exceed it. But he invariably refused admittance to all except fools or such as were his enemies. When suffered to pass in, however, their wonder was extreme, and few having entered it wished to return. On the

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contrary, the delights which they experienced so infatuated their minds that they easily yielded to the demands of the magician and resigned their inheritances to him without the slightest reserve. The fools, of course believing it to be paradise, and that the flowers and fruits were of immortal growth, while they themselves were the chosen and happy possessors of the land, gave not another thought to the future. They luxuriated in voluptuousness, and surrendered their whole hearts to impure gratification. The consequence was that in a moment of sensual intoxication the magician cut them off; and thus, through the instrumentality of a fictitious Eden, perpetrated the foulest enormities."

Ruth's mind was at peace. She would forgive George Piggott,—if he asked her,—and she would also endeavor to explain her sincere sorrow to Arthur Waring.

Lieutenant Waring sat in one of the rooms of his club-house down-town engaged in the deep meditation of sweet and bitter fancy.

The sweet part consisted of a fond recollection of the moment he had held Ruth in his

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arms the night before. The bitter part was the fact that she had promptly disengaged herself from his embrace and fled from the library. Between the bitter and the sweet stood the persistent thought that he had not seen her since, and his heart grew faint with forebodings of disastrous consequences.

"I was a fool to risk a companionship which in time might have ripened into something more desirable," he groaned. "And supposing it had always remained friendship," he continued, in an angry manner, "was not that enough happiness?" Tossing his cigar into the grate, he turned sharply to the call-boy, who was standing close by, and exclaimed, "Oh, you idiot! You unmitigated, long-eared fool!"

"Yes, sir," answered the boy, who in his short club experience had never before seen the lieutenant in such a condition.

"Bring me some decent pens. And be quick about it, too."

The meek-eyed boy hurried off like a frightened rabbit.

Waring then seated himself at a desk and began to write what was intended to be a very

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full, explanatory, and convincing letter to the absent Ruth.

"My dear Miss," he began. "Well, hardly, after last——" And that sheet of paper went into the waste-basket in pieces.

"Darling Ru——" he began again. But the spirit of uncertainty seized him, and the club lost another sheet of embossed note-paper.

"Dear old Sweetbrier." He rejoiced in the inspiration. Here was the spirit of *camaraderie*. His anger relaxed, and a genial flow of good humor swept over his vexed soul. How easy a matter it seemed, now that he had reached the firm ground of friendship. How her lips would wreath in smiles and her dark eyes sparkle as she recognized the familiar tone. His thoughts flew fast in the rising glow of exhilaration. He even imagined her spontaneous reply, beginning, "Dear old Boy."

And then his evil genius stood beside him in the form of the frank, smiling, exuberant Mr. George Piggott.

"I saw you from the hallway, and so walked right in," George exclaimed, with boisterous effusion, while the boy in buttons, holding the



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visitor's card in his hand, stood bowing in apologetic confusion. '

"Dear Lord!" said Waring, beneath his breath. And a third sheet of paper went the way of its forerunners into the faithful basket. "I am glad to see you," he vociferated, grasping George's hand by way of welcome. "It is well you found me, as I am not often here in the daytime. After a light luncheon we can talk things over."

The two men sat at a small table in the café, and under the stimulating influence of "King William," George confidentially launched into personalities in which he always played the part of the hero.

"I am looking up an old sweetheart of mine," he began, with apparent carelessness.

Waring concealed a yawn in a politely guarded cough. He noticed that his guest bore outward and vulgar evidences of improving worldly circumstances. He wore an insufferably red necktie and checkered clothing, and he presented the sleek, self-satisfied appearance of a young man who had already put the world at his feet. The gold-tipped finish which

## Graystone

rounded off his large frame, in the shape of various ornaments of gold and precious stones, and the large seal ring which he wore on the third finger of his left hand were also observable.

"She left England before I did, and is living in some part of this city," George continued, indolently.

Waring concealed another yawn and suggested that they finish their cigars in the library.

"This is one of the best collections of books in the country," he began, with some enthusiasm, as they dropped into opposite chairs. "I would like to show you an old edition of——"

"Don't, please!" George held up a fat white hand in gloomy protest. "I wouldn't give a bloomin' tu'pence for the whole business,—they make me tired."

Waring looked at him critically and wondered how he could avoid asking him out to Graystone for dinner.

"I remember that you expressed similar sentiments on board the ship; but you have lucid intervals, no doubt, when your mind works along normal channels. Periods when——"

## Graystone

"Very seldom," interrupted George, without noticing the indignant sarcasm. "I have cut all that to make money, and have a snug bit already. Brown and I took an option on a small tract of coal lands and shoved it into a syndicate of bankers and brokers for cash and securities. Oh, I'm on top all right!" He flushed proudly. Then he slapped Waring on the knee and winked offensively. "Six months, you know, of nothing but business, and among strangers, makes a fellow long for a sight of his sweetheart. So I thought it about time to run over and see Ruth——"

"I beg pardon," Waring broke in, as he leaned forward, in ghastly terror. "You mentioned——"

"Ruth Martine," ejaculated the astonished youth. "I thought I had mentioned her name before."

Arthur Waring was making a brave fight; but the details of that moment buried themselves deeply in his brain, like biting acid. Many years afterwards he could recall every attending circumstance: The commonplace face and the red necktie directly before him; the

## Graystone

beautiful painting of Musidora hanging above his head; the Louis XIV. clock ticking monotonously on the carved oaken mantel,—he even noted the exact time: twenty-eight minutes past four,—and the Persian tree of life in the grotesque pattern of the rug at his feet.

“I remember,” Waring interrogated, with harsh, judicial sternness, “speaking to you of Miss Martine when we were on the vessel, and you then denied her acquaintance.”

George flushed again and laughed unpleasantly.

“I must have been very drunk,” he confessed, with jocularly. And then, noting the severity in Waring’s face, he squirmed uneasily in his chair and began a voluble explanation: “Why, I have known Ruth Martine ever since she was so high,” laying his heavily-ringed hand on the polished table-top.

The lieutenant bowed courteously. “And you are——” The words would not come from his parched throat.

“Engaged to her,” George explained in lying confusion, while he nervously twisted the links of his massive gold chain.

## Graystone

The gray moustache twitched almost imperceptibly and the tall form straightened into soldierly erectness.

“I will show you the car to Miss Martine’s house ; it is about an hour’s ride from here. Present my compliments to Miss Blake.”

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## CHAPTER IX

---

*"I wonne her with a gyrdle of gelt,  
Emboost with buegle about the belt."*

WHEN Ruth came down-stairs on the morning following that eventful day, it was long past the breakfast hour; but Sallie had reserved some choice morsels for her "honey-bird;" and as she sat in her softly-clinging morning-gown, toasting her daintily-slippered feet at the open-grate fire, she sipped her cup of fragrant coffee and looked with renewed cheerfulness into the face of what had seemed to her a cold world.

The wickedness of that kiss in the library was not so apparent in the comforting atmosphere of the dining-room, and——

"Well, it might have been worse; and I was just a little bit hysterical," she mused.

She would think no more about it. But he must *never* do so again. She would be more

## Graystone

dignified and reserved, more of a sister to him. The fault was evidently her own. She would be polite, of course, but modestly distant and lady-like.

Having settled the affair in her womanly *ex parte* fashion, finally and forever, she took up her daily duties.

The first and most exacting one was the care of her aunt. That estimable spinster had for some months been suffering the twinges of rheumatism with a stubborn grimness which she called "Christian fortitude." The cold and varying weather of an American spring kept Miss Blake in a state of creepy shivers, which the wide-open fire-places and airy halls of Graystone only aggravated.

She carefully avoided all unnecessary exposure, and therefore seldom left her room during this period. Her disposition, not very angelic at its best, became fretful and irritable under her enforced idleness. She was nervous and in a bad humor on that particular morning.

And Ruth's troubles began.

As she softly crept into her aunt's room a draught of air came down the broad stairway

## Graystone

and slammed the door with a bang sufficiently violent to awaken the seven sleepers.

"You are so careless, Ruth," moaned the invalid, with a long-drawn sigh.

"The wind blew it, auntie dear. I——"

"Don't shout, child. I could hear you across the street," she interrupted. "Children of the present generation are so different from what they used to be."

Ruth moved gently to the bedside and tenderly clasped the long, gaunt hand in her own warm, loving one.

"You must have been reading very late last night," her aunt complained. "Some trashy stuff."

Ruth smoothed the pillows and deftly arranged things in her own noiseless, caressing way.

"I am sure it annoys Mr. Waring to hear you moving about at all hours of the night," the aunt remonstrated, reproachfully.

The black eyes glanced into a mirror in passing. A red rose would have looked pale against those cheeks.

"You must think more of others," moralized Miss Blake.



## Graystone

At luncheon it was the same.

And it continued all through that dismal day, until the scurrying gray clouds overhead gathered closer into a dreary wintry evening. Then Ruth sat by the window of the large front room, and her thoughts were of Lieutenant Waring and how she would receive him at dinner. The *rôle* of a sister did not appear so natural and easy in the long hours of the gloaming as when the idea had first originated in the virtue-inspiring morning. Excepting Auntie Blake, she was without companions. So was he, "poor fellow!" She might possibly relax—a little—if he seemed sorrowful and depressed. After all, he was so patient and gentle, so thoughtful, so——

The admonitory ebony-cased clock rang six resounding strokes, and the cold fire-dogs on the darkened hearthstone seemed to shiver expectantly.

"He will be here presently," Ruth murmured, as she silently tiptoed into the library, lighted the cheery reading-lamp, and touched a match to the wood on the hearth. The smoke curled slowly at first, and then a gleaming

## Graystone

tongue of flame leaped joyously upward between the two old fire-dogs.

"He is coming!"

The tender heart of dear little Sweetbrier throbbed in wild confusion as she heard the sound of heavy footsteps on the front porch. A moment later the door swung slowly back, admitting the suspicious Sallie, who handed her a visiting-card, upon which appeared—

MR. GEORGE PIGGOTT

NEW YORK

The fluttering of anticipation died out at that very instant. The imperious young woman walked majestically across the room and with exaggerated energy extinguished the tiny flame of the reading-lamp—and threw Mr. George Piggott's card into the fire.

Then, after much deliberation, she seated herself in the leather-covered chair close to the fire-dogs, and, to their amusement, no doubt, indulged in a quiet, insignificant cry.

## Graystone

For some time the tardy lover of her girlhood sat alone in the chilly and dimly-lighted front room, engaged in mental calculations, including an inventory of everything in it. In a quarter of an hour he had appraised each article of furniture or ornament at its auction price ; and the remaining fifteen minutes he spent muttering imprecations launched at the pretty head of his old sweetheart.

In half an hour Ruth stood smiling before George Piggott in the open doorway, and he rose to greet her.

The tall, graceful form of Ruth Martine, in her stylish, well-fitting gown, appeared marvelously beautiful to his admiring eyes. The straight-limbed, awkward country girl of former days had become the mature, rounded symmetry of exquisite womanhood now standing before him. His first impulse was to greet her with a boisterous, overwhelming effusion which would drown any reproach she might have in store for him. But as he approached she seemed so imperious, and in such control of herself and of the situation, that his manner changed completely ; and with an ordinary hand-shake these

## Graystone

two old friends took up the broken tie of their last parting, and talked about the weather!

From the subject of the weather it was easy to progress to their mutual condition of health, and from that to the utterly wearisome and commonplace would have been a short step.

"I've done well, Ruth, since coming to this country," George said, proudly. "Everything I undertake seems to thrive."

And, while Ruth nodded a languid assent to what he was saying, her mind kept repeating, "Why is Mr. Waring so late for dinner?"

"I am making money right along," he continued, in confidence.

The dreamy black eyes, avoiding his, roamed restlessly around the tall, wainscotted room. She was hoping that each moment would bring *him*. Oh, Waring loved her! She knew he loved her! The lustrous eyes grew softly liquid and a reddish tint glowed in her olive skin.

"I'll be a rich man very soon," George asserted, taking a chair next to hers.

On the pretence of drawing closer the heavy curtains, she arose and looked out of the window.

## Graystone

The night was cold and dismal. The fitful wind had subsided into a sullen quiet.

Ah ! here he comes !

Joy filled her heart, and she resumed her seat near George and listened to his monologue with such sudden and wrapt attention that his heavy spirit took fire from her kindling eyes and burned fervently.

"By Jove ! Ruth, but you have improved," he exclaimed, with honesty.

No, that was not his step on the porch, and her heart began to sink. He was always so punctual, so exact to the minute. She was in a fever of suspense, and her joy disappeared in the clouds of hope deferred.

"You will stay to dinner?" she politely asked.

Being conscious of an abrupt change in her manner, George postponed his proposal until a more auspicious time.

And it came quickly. There was no lack of conversation at the table, for Ruth became exuberantly talkative. Her merry laugh rang out a running accompaniment to all he said, and George again took courage under its reviving influence.

## Graystone

Far down in her pure heart she knew it was all counterfeit ; but Arthur Waring must be punished for his absence on this of all other nights, because——

“ He will find a cheerful party awaiting his arrival,” she said to herself, maliciously.

So on this evening the fair Ruth laughed loudly and with affected merriment, looking innocently into the eyes of her old playmate, yet at times glancing over his head and around his bulky shoulders across the wide hall and into the dimly lighted library beyond. All about were evidences of ancestry,—old blue china shone in its intense respectability, as did also the quaint cut-glass goblets and twisted silver candle-sticks. The beautiful girl, as hostess during her aunt’s illness, sat at the head of the table. She wore no jewelry, no ornaments—only the pale yellow and black gown of clinging soft stuff which enveloped her exquisite form and enhanced the tint of her expressive features.

As the dinner progressed George reminded her of the times when she, as a little girl, had promised to marry him ; how she had gone away, leaving him alone in Warwickshire ; how

## Graystone

he had eagerly followed her, overcoming all obstacles ; how he—thanks to Mr. Brown and a lucky investment—was rich, even now ; and, finally, that he was here to claim her to——

They were interrupted by Phyllis, the dusky little hand-maiden. Their conversation had become animated, when Ruth again heard footsteps on the front porch. A spirit of impish contrariness possessed her, as, flushed with the impulse, she took her small cup of coffee and arose from the table.

“We will enjoy it more in the library,” she suggested.

And George willingly followed the swaying, lovely form of his old-time sweetheart into the dim, fire-lit room.

When he essayed to kiss her she made no great resistance, for she thought how thoroughly she hated Lieutenant Arthur Waring. How contemptible he was in absenting himself. How——

Her disappointment and vexation gave George Piggott his opportunity. He became more confidential, and said,—

## Graystone

"I told Waring, this afternoon, that we were engaged. So you——"

"You told who?" she interrupted, smiling sweetly. A woman can smile while her heart is breaking. Not a tremor of lip or eyelid betrayed her emotion.

The inexperienced youth was deceived by her calmness, and he answered, "Lieutenant Waring,—a friend of mine."

Her torment increased ; her heart was clutched as in a vise, but she made no sign.

"And you told him?" she led on, encouragingly, while she fixed his wandering, unsteady gaze with her cool, dark eyes.

"That you were my old sweetheart," he proudly continued.

"And what did he say to that?" she asked, with deceptive sweetness.

George racked his brain in squirming agitation.

"Upon my word, I forget," he remonstrated ; "but he sent his respects to Miss Blake."

"I will take them to her now," she concluded, and left him sitting alone by the experienced, wise old fire-dogs.



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## CHAPTER X

---

*"What fallen the flocks, so they have the fleece  
And get all the gayne, paying but a peece."*

**G**EORGE PIGGOTT and his friend Mr. Brown had already made a large amount of money, and their prospects for further increasing their income were exceedingly bright. Mr. Brown's methods of business were more productive than a burglar's, and were not nearly so dangerous. There was also this difference,—a burglar often defies the law, while Mr. Brown simply evaded it. Nor was there anything unlawful in the venture which had suddenly lifted "Brown & Co." from the obscurity of desk-room in an office to a handsomely furnished suite in the most expensive building on Broadway. The plan was very simple. Many had tried it before, with varying degrees of success; but it remained for Brown & Co. to infuse into their "proposition"

## Graystone

a new idea, which literally carried everything before it. As the scheme was subtle and intangible, it cannot be named, but its influence will be demonstrated as the story progresses.

As a preliminary, Mr. Brown visited undeveloped portions of the Allegheny Mountains, insinuated his benevolent-looking person into the humble cabins of the scattered settlers, and there remained until he had gained an accurate knowledge of the land and its possibilities. When this information proved satisfactory, he cultivated the confidence and good-will of the owners until he secured their trembling, scrawling signatures to a carefully-worded non-contestible paper, called an option. It sometimes required perseverance and many changes of bed-fellows to accomplish his purpose, but Mr. Brown did not grumble. As he moved from one point to another he met with people of different shades of belief in politics and religion; but it made no difference to him, for he could apparently change his principles with the ease of taking off an old coat and putting on a new one.

When he obtained the options, the smiling,

## Graystone

good-natured Mr. Brown assumed the right to enter upon and take possession of various tracts of land and all they contained, including many thousand tons of good coal to each acre, which a kind Providence had safely stored under the rough clearings,—a condition unknown to their humble owners.

For these valuable franchises Mr. Brown paid nothing unless he encountered unexpected intelligence and resistance; but this he usually overcame by the payment of five or ten dollars, ostensibly as an evidence of good faith, but which afterwards proved to be a small but binding part-payment of the purchase-money.

In the heart of the Alleghenies land is plenty and settlers few, so it did not require much money to obtain options upon thousands of acres of valuable coal lands. In fact, Mr. Brown's modest wealth, supplemented by George Piggott's slender patrimony, was sufficient to tie up the best part of an entire county, which, under the provisions of our flexible laws, the two speculators now practically controlled. The options stipulated that a further payment of one or two dollars per acre

## Graystone

should be made within a year if the agreement were completed ; but as they were not subject to forfeiture in case they did not buy, the contract was cheerfully undertaken by Brown & Co. to find capitalists who would be willing to buy five thousand tons of coal in the ground at the rate of two dollars, or three hundred millions of tons in the same ratio. The contract was very much like the handle of a jug,—all on one side.

As George Piggott counted over the packet of options, each one carefully labelled with the owner's name, number of acres, and price per acre, he checked them off on a long slip of paper, and then went carefully over the addition to assure himself of the sum total,—fifty thousand acres. He put them safely away, and in dreamy solitude indulged in visions of the possession of unlimited acres of land and unnumbered tons of coal, uninterrupted save by the loud ticking of the large clock. All his previous schemes were as nothing when compared with this one. The fire was fast expiring on the black irons of the grate of the inner office, and he added a fresh log before settling down into his big easy-chair, with his legs out-

## Graystone

stretched before him. And somehow the fire revived memories of an evening spent, nearly a year before, in the library at Graystone. How beautiful she had appeared! Slender, erect, exquisitely formed, and gowned in the clinging yellow stuff, with the black trimmings. And she had gone from him like an offended queen. He recalled the flush of anger on her cheek, her sparkling black eyes, and the impatient toss of her head as she swept past him from the room; and he remembered, with an uneasy shrug, that he did not have the courage to stop her or to ask a reason for his abrupt dismissal. But things were different with him now: there was practically no limit to the possibilities of this latest venture. He arose and paced around the room with the stealthy tread of an Indian. As he passed the open door-way leading to the outer office, he was startled by seeing the large, round face of Mr. Brown emerging from the darkness.

"I see you are busy," said his partner, as he entered. "I hope I don't intrude."

"Not in the least," replied George. "I was going over that deal in my mind, and it

## Graystone

looks like a sure thing. You must have worked pretty hard with the natives to get all those options," he continued, turning on the electric light.

"Not very," replied Mr. Brown, carelessly. "But they will hold water all right," he went on, with much assurance. "Two judges and one of the best lawyers in New York have passed on them. And now it's up to you," he concluded, as he seated his bulky figure in a wide-armed chair.

"You mean about the—the organization of the company?" George inquired.

"Oh, that's easy enough," replied the other lightly. "Anybody can do that; but it takes a gentleman, you know, to distribute the bonus stock where it will do the most good." Mr. Brown's round, boyish face looked the picture of youthful innocence as his wavering lower lip formed a persuasive smile. "That's why I selected you," he asserted, with confidence.

George Piggott coughed in a nervous, artificial way and moved uneasily. There was something very irritating in Mr. Brown's manner. He was so intensely familiar. He took

## Graystone

everything so entirely for granted. Above all, he seemed to occupy so much of the office. His personality filled up and overflowed all the unoccupied space, impregnating even the very atmosphere.

"I don't quite understand the connection," said George, loftily; "but of course I am willing to——"

"You don't have to understand everything," interposed Mr. Brown, with sudden impatience. "Just put down what I tell you."

George reddened a little.

"First, we'll buy the property for one hundred thousand dollars," his partner continued.

George put down the figures without comment, although he wanted to ask his exuberant senior where under the sun the money was to come from.

"Then we'll issue first mortgage bonds for that amount, and sell them to our friends, the bankers," explained Mr. Brown. "They'll hold the bag," he added, with his characteristic chuckle, "while we capitalize the whole business at ten million dollars of full paid, non-assessable, common stock, and issue it all to ourselves."

## Graystone

"For what consideration?" inquired Piggott, who was becoming confused by the big figures.

"Why, the property, of course," exclaimed Brown, with enthusiasm. "And it's worth every cent of it, too."

George chewed the end of his pencil and, moving towards the window, gazed out at the hundreds of little squares of brilliant light in the tall office-building across the street and at the irregular silhouette of the roofs against the afterglow of a western sky.

"A fine, juicy melon," persisted Mr. Brown.

"A melon!" repeated the other, vaguely.

"Yes; to be cut up and sold in slices," chuckled Mr. Brown, with complacent fullness. "And you will get one-half of the melon."

"Which will amount to about five million dollars, less the bonus," the young man observed, after a long pause, as he sank back into his chair. "We'll be rich men," he added, feeling a fluttering dizziness.

"We *are* rich men," the other assured him, positively. "I have had considerable experience in this kind of business."



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Piggott lighted a cigar and walked about the room in heated confusion.

"It's a tremendous profit on such a small investment," he suggested. "Is it quite—quite——"

"Of course it is," replied Brown; "pure business, all through. Now, you're a gentleman, and I'm nobody. Together we will make a strong team. You can reach the right kind of people, while I would be shown the back door. All you have to do is to carry on that aristocratic feature, just as you did on the steamer——"

"You don't mean to say——" interrupted the other, excitedly.

Brown held up his two fat hands. "Say nothing. You can be a lord, if you wish. So much the better. But you are the foreign gentleman who will bring the lambs in on a gallop."

Mr. Brown arose from his chair and moved towards the door.

"I am afraid you overrate my—my abilities," said George, making a pretence of arranging his papers.

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When his partner was gone, George unlocked the top drawer of his desk, took out a small sheet of plain note-paper, and began to write:

“DEAR LITTLE SWEETBRIER:

“It has been a long time since——”

He stopped, smiled scornfully, and then tore the paper into small pieces. The tiny flicker of love, lighted by the heat of his excited fancy, had blazed for a moment and then expired.

“Five million dollars,” he whispered, softly.  
“With that I can marry any girl I wish.”

The cold wind whistled sharply around the angles of the tall building. In the street, far below, small black objects were moving in all directions, accelerated into activity by the biting, frosty air. They were mostly office-boys and clerks who had been kept beyond their usual hour by the pressure of business.

With a smile upon his frank, good-natured face, George leisurely locked his desk and gave a final glance around the office. It appeared to him that the furniture was rather shabby and

## Graystone

the rooms small and stuffy. It would be necessary to engage a good manager and a private secretary ; and there were several other matters of pressing importance, which would keep him very busy on the following day.

He was weak from hunger. So he decided to dine that evening at Delmonico's. The cars being crowded and uncomfortable, he hailed a hansom and drove there. It was his first experience with that mode of conveyance.

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## CHAPTER XI

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*"Sorrowe no neede be hastened on,  
For he will come, without calling, anone."*

LIEUTENANT WARING passed through a tumultuous period following the day upon which George Pig-gott had so unexpectedly appeared at the club. His bachelor arrangements, which included a room down-town, made it comparatively easy for him to absent himself from Graystone for a time without much personal inconvenience; but his mind was swinging like a pendulum back and forth between a longing desire to see Ruth and a stubborn sense of duty and honor which kept him from her.

He was a dozen times on the verge of yielding to his inclination to go to her, to throw his arms around her precious person, and defy any one to take her from him. At such times his heart made strenuous demonstrations of insub-

## Graystone

ordination which taxed his will-power to subdue.

Then came cool, dispassionate, judicial reason, and he recognized the stern path of duty, but his heart throbbed a farewell to "poor little Sweetbrier."

Having taken dinner at the club, he went to his room, and, after slipping on a smoking-jacket and dropping into an easy-chair, he lit his brierwood pipe, opened a book he had taken at random from the orderly row on the mantel, and began to read.

It happened that the volume he selected was an old favorite, which in a time-worn, wrinkled condition he had discovered amidst a pile of rubbish in a second-hand book-store. He had joyfully purchased it and placed it with his other treasures. And now this mellow "Musarum Deliciæ" of 1656 contained an inspiration :

"Stay, O stay, and still pursue,  
Bid not such happiness adieu,  
Know'st thou what a woman is ?  
An image of celestial bliss.  
Such a one is thought to be  
The nearest to divinity."

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A light wreath of smoke encircled the benevolent head of the reader as a long-drawn sigh escaped him. Once more his deceitful heart leaped wildly as he hastily drew forth a fine old-fashioned watch. It was just seven o'clock.

His eyes caught another verse of the mocking ballad :

“Come away, do not pursue  
A shadow that will follow you.  
Woman lighter than a feather,  
Got and lost, and altogether  
Such a creature may be thought  
Void of reason, thing of nought.”

Waring leaned wearily back in his chair. The sense of duty had him now in a vise-like grip,—the battle over self was won.

“She may marry a Chinaman, for all I care,” he concluded, after a long reverie ; and he again looked at his watch. It was nearly eight o'clock.

“I could get there in an hour,” he muttered, while his heart beat violently and his face grew white. “I believe, I will—go—to—Graystone !”

Never did a street-car wend its way so slowly.

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Never was a burly driver so completely wrapped into a bundle of insensibility. Never was a conductor so amiably willing to wait any number of minutes for lazy, deliberate passengers. In those days a Philadelphia street-car was a small, four-wheeled affair, dragged along at uncertain intervals by a pair of horses whose emaciated bodies and protruding bones bore pathetic testimony to the amount of horse-flesh required to earn a dividend.

Waring sat impatiently in one corner and counted each minute's delay, and he scowled with annoyance when a woman, with many bundles, after a vociferous colloquy with the sleepy conductor, had finally boarded the car, shedding one parcel after another on her way to a seat. She was a stout, comfortable-looking person of perhaps five-and-forty, with fat red cheeks and china-blue eyes. Her hair, once black, was streaked with many threads of gray, and she wore around her ample shoulders a plaid shawl of a large and brilliant pattern. Waring's attention was attracted by an incongruous hat, of a coquettish turban shape, with enormous flowers, perched high on the woman's

## Graystone

head, and fastened so insecurely that each untoward jerk of the horses threatened to dislodge it entirely. There was manifest trouble, however, in the woman's good-natured face, and she gave frequent sighs, which checked his amused interest and changed it to pity. He found himself wondering how far she was going and what her humdrum life's story might be.

"A mother of the Gracchi," he uttered under his gray moustache. "The head and front of six noisy brats and an inoffensive husband," he summarized. And then he settled down in resigned patience as the car rolled leisurely out towards the suburbs.

It was somewhat of a surprise to Lieutenant Waring when, after much bustling commotion, the chubby-faced woman, with her bundles, left the car and landed by his side on the corner of the lane leading to Graystone. But it aroused his sympathetic nature to witness her frantic effort to carry at least a half-dozen parcels with one pair of hands.

"I am going your way," he said, hastily overtaking her; "and if you will allow me to assist you——"



## Graystone

"Indade, and you're very koind," she replied, dropping an old-fashioned courtesy, which gave the top-lofty turban hat an alarming slant. "And if you can show a poor widdy a place hereabouts they call Sthonegray, the blessin' of God will rest on you for the favor."

Her accent was of the rich brogue peculiar to certain children of Erin, which, once acquired, neither time nor distance can entirely efface. Good luck to the ship that brought her over.

"Graystone," he gently corrected her. "I will show you the way."

The night air was cool for April, but there was a bright moon and a promise of spring in the atmosphere which made the blood tingle and the heart rejoice.

The buds were swelling on the tall chestnut-trees, and tiny sprouts of green were pushing up between the brown, twisted stalks of the bordering honeysuckles.

Waring walked several paces ahead on the narrow side-path, while the grateful woman followed in his footsteps, so there was not much chance for conversation.

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"A nurse, perhaps, for Miss Blake," the lieutenant had finally decided. "She must be very ill, or perhaps Ruth——"

His heart beat in anxious anticipation as a light from an upper window of Graystone shone through the leafless trees and across the lane before them.

"This is the place," he said, putting her bundles on the front porch. "And here comes Miss——"

"Mother!"

The door swung wide open, almost before Waring let fall the heavy iron knocker, and he saw the lovely form of Ruth nearly disappear in the capacious bosom of his companion.

A moment afterwards a soft, warm hand was in his eager clasp, and the old familiar voice rang in his ears.

"How cold you are! Come right in to the fire."

She led them to the library, where the wood burned cheerfully in the fire-place. His old easy-chair was in its accustomed place. Even the round table, with its bulging front, had

## Graystone

not been disturbed, and his pipes and tobacco were convenient and enticing.

"This is my mother, Lieutenant Waring," Ruth said, graciously. "We will return shortly. Auntie Blake is so impatient to see us."

And Ruth and the good Widow Martine withdrew to the upper regions.

"Dear Lord! keep her from all trouble, and make her happy forever," Waring prayed from the depths of his fervent heart, as he settled down in his easy-chair.

When Ruth returned she presented a very grave face, and was apparently in much anxiety of mind.

"If I should ask you to do me a great favor——" She faltered.

He was on his feet in an instant.

"Ruth, my dear child!" he exclaimed, with alarm, while he vainly searched her troubled face. "What is the matter?"

The lustrous dark eyes turned appealingly to his, and he saw that they were filled with tears, while the curved lips trembled with agitation.

"We think it necessary to get the best physician that can be procured. And if you—

## Graystone

if it would not be too much trouble—perhaps you might get us——”

“Is Miss Blake so much worse?” he inquired, putting on his overcoat and starting into the hall.

“I think she is dying,” she gasped in a tremulous, frightened voice, gazing at him with wide-open eyes. Death was to her such an abstract thing, so far away from her own young heart, she had not given it a moment’s thought for many years; and now the dread, gaunt terror of her childhood was hovering over Graystone. She felt shocked, weak, and helpless.

He took her fluttering white hand in his and kissed it.

“Courage, little girl,” he assured her, in his gentle, knightly fashion. “I will get the best,—the very best.”

And before she had closed the door his tall, manly figure was far down the lane.

In a short time Waring was at the door of the University Hospital, inquiring for his friend Doctor Fairlie, and five minutes later the two good Samaritans were hurrying back to Graystone.

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"It's not Miss Martine," Waring almost breathlessly assured his friend. "She asked me to get the best physician in Philadelphia, and so——"

"You came for *me*, of course," assented "Jack" Fairlie, with a cheery laugh at the other's dubious expression.

Years before, two young "tow-heads" sat side by side on a hard wooden bench in the old Hill School. Together they had swapped stories and jack-knives, copied each other's lessons, and read smuggled volumes of the "Arabian Nights" and the "Deerslayer" behind the raised lid of their partnership desk. Together they had dropped marbles on the floor in study-hour, and created so much disorder generally that the long-suffering master had finally called them "*Par nobile fratrum*" in withering irony, and had added, "the worst pair in the school," which they both agreed was more than corporal punishment.

Together they had joined the volunteers hurriedly organized to oppose the rebel General Early on his march to Washington,—one as a

## Graystone

common soldier hoping to win shoulder-straps, the other to gain surgical experience in a field-hospital.

And again in Paris these two had worked hard and dreamed, each in his own way, but keeping the faith of true *camaraderie*. And now, although the gray moustache and bald head of one and the growing corpulence of the other gave indubitable evidence of passing years, they were still "Jack" and "Artie" to each other, and would so continue to the end.

Ruth was anxiously waiting for them at the door.

"My friend, Doctor John Fairlie," said Waring, with an air of proud confidence; "the best——"

"May I see Miss Blake?" interposed the embarrassed doctor.

"She has been asleep ever since——"

The experienced physician looked suddenly grave and went quietly up the stairs.

In a few minutes he was back in the library with Waring.

"She must have died before you left the

## Graystone

house," he calculated, holding his watch in his hand. "Rheumatism of the heart, I think, from what the servant——"

"Servant?" queried Waring. "We have only Sallie, the colored woman, and her daughter,—and they are both away. That's the reason Miss Martine was obliged to ask me to go for a doctor," he said, reflecting.

"She was a rosy-cheeked Irish——"

"For God's sake, Jack," interrupted the lieutenant, hastily closing the library door and sinking, ghastly white, into a chair.

"Eh——! Why, Artie, old boy, you're shaking all over," said the alarmed doctor. "A man of your size shouldn't run two miles for every old woman. It is too much on the heart. Have you any 'King William' on hand?" He started towards the hall door. "I'll just ask that Irish lady——"

Instantly Waring grasped him by the shoulder. "If you don't sit down, I'll brain you!" he hissed, in an undertone.

"Sit down yourself, sir," commanded the doctor, as though he had a crazy patient to deal with. "Let me feel your pulse," he added, soothingly.

## Graystone

Later the two friends shook hands at the front door.

"I will make all the necessary arrangements," said Doctor Fairlie, kindly.

And Waring went back into the house, with a heavy heart, to comfort the sorrowing women.



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## CHAPTER XII

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*"Let be, as maybe, that is past ;  
That is to come, let be forecast."*

THE unexpected death of Aunt Blake was the second great sorrow in the life of Ruth Martine. She felt in a condition of bewildered helplessness. The opportune arrival of her mother had relieved somewhat her feeling of utter friendlessness ; and the unlooked-for return of Lieutenant Arthur Waring, with his genial smile and sympathizing presence, had done much to mitigate her loneliness.

Ruth had sent a letter to George Piggott, addressed to New York, informing him of her sad bereavement, and, yielding to the softening influence of grief, had even apologized for her apparent rudeness to him on the occasion of his visit to Graystone. And she had received in reply a mass of sickly white flowers wired into

## Graystone

a wreath which he no doubt thought sufficiently large to make ample apology for his absence during her period of distress. Further than this George had not concerned himself regarding the friends of his childhood. It was not part of his short creed to visit widows and fatherless in their affliction. It now seemed to Ruth and her mother as though their troubles had only begun.

The small income which Miss Blake had regularly received from her Philadelphia bankers ceased upon her death, as it had come from an annuity provided for her by an old friend long since deceased. A story had been many times told in her family—and it had lost nothing in the repetition—that Miss Blake had long ago indulged in a little romance—for who has not?—in which a mysterious old gentleman of untold wealth had been her hero. But, if the story were true, she had never been heard refer to it during her lifetime; and as the cold finger of Death had sealed her lips forever, the secret of her early life was not revealed, though the good Widow Martine, her sister, recalled the day she left her parents' thatched cottage in

## Graystone

Ireland to accept a position as governess for a widower having two young children.

"Your aunt had a power more edication thin th' rist of us; 'nd was always a-spellin' and radin' books," she confided to Ruth, in her richest brogue. "She was a great scholar, 'nd tuk to letthers loike a duck to wather," continued the widow, shaking her head in commiseration; "but niver a word did she write us, until wan day she coom back with her mouth shet fast, 'nd niver onc't opened it." She sighed compassionately, while tears rolled down her ruddy cheeks. "An' we could make our own remarks upon it; but she niver tould a haight—th' poor dear!" At which point the good soul fell to weeping over her loss, and Ruth sat and wondered.

While the abrupt termination of Miss Blake's life had been very distressing to the widow and her daughter, it did not make the slightest difference in the harmonious processes of Nature. At first it had seemed to Ruth as if the hastening spring would surely feel a retarding influence from this overpowering death.

But the bright sun warmed into life the tender,

## Graystone

long dormant bulbs. April showers loosened the hard, clinging earth and brought forth flowers in abundance. The short grass was already dotted with delicate crocuses, and the borders were radiant with hyacinths and many-colored tulips.

Fortunately, the awakening of nature impressed Ruth so strongly that she could not long resist its subtle but strenuous influence; and with the reanimation of spring came hope and aspirations. She experienced a quickening of her old ambition, and entertained again the desire to do good, to work in the vineyard, and to make her life of value to others.

How often will such thoughts come to us in youth; how seldom in cynical old age, when we most need them.

Ruth's mind was active as she kissed her mother good-night and entered her own bedroom resolved to bring the matter to a definite conclusion. On such occasions she would conduct imaginary conversations with her other self, which had this advantage,—while it was sweet Ruth herself who argued on both sides

## Graystone

of the question, there was no manifest superiority on either side, no undue advantage taken. And, having reached a conclusion, she felt assured it was the best result obtainable—for the obvious reason that it was dear, unselfish Ruth who won the debate.

She loosened her dark hair, which fell below her knees in enveloping, glorious sinuosity, and began the debate.

"There is one way," suggested her other self, insinuatingly, which made Ruth flush a reddish hue; "and perhaps another." The tint deepened over her beautiful neck and shoulders; she lost courage, and failed to respond. Instead, she crept timidly into bed; having first extinguished the light in the tall silver candlestick.

"You might marry George Piggott," came from the tempter.

"Never!" from the depths of her white pillow.

"Or Lieutenant——"

The drooping eyelids, edged with their long, curved lashes, covered the splendor of her dark eyes, and she fell peacefully asleep.

So it is with the innocent and pure of heart.

## Graystone

Not so with Arthur Waring. That seasoned and weather-beaten old bachelor sat in the library below, making heroic efforts to smother a passion, without the possession of which he knew his heart would be as a desert. To accomplish this desire he invoked the assistance of his books, a pipe, and the bottle of "V. O. P.," and made this cowardly attack on all womankind, including the innocent Ruth:

"Who was it betrayed the Capitol?—A woman!  
Who lost Mark Antony the world?—A woman!  
Who was the cause of a ten years' war,  
And laid at last old Troy in ashes?—Woman!  
Destructive, damnable, deceitful woman!"

He was especially pleased with the last line. It had a sonorous swashbuckle, seventeenth century flavor about it. It lifted woman from her lofty pedestal by brute force, and cruelly hauled her around by the hair of her head. He turned the little mottled volume over his knee, and solemnly lit his pipe. His eye chanced to fall on a branch of lilac blossoms, bending gracefully over the edge of the table. He was sufficiently rational to realize the fact that lilac

## Graystone

branches do not sprout from mahogany tables. Ergo, it had grown somewhere else, and consequently must have been brought into the library and placed on his table by—somebody.

Then the truth dawned upon him, and he reverently touched the fragrant blossoms, while—hidden by his gray moustache—under the pretence of smelling, he kissed them.

He turned the musty old book face upwards, glanced scornfully at the title, and then emitted an immense volume of smoke, which curled fantastically around his head.

“Thomas Otway,” he said, with superlative contempt, “you are a fool!”

There was a crackle and a splutter on the hearth,—a sudden hilarity between the sapient old fire-dogs, which *might* have been caused by the mischievous activity of the long-imprisoned volatile gases escaping from the burning wood. Be that as it may, it is a gross error to suppose that fire-dogs, of one hundred and fifty years of age, have no sensibilities!

A question which the occupants of Graystone dreaded to consider came up for dis-

## Graystone

cussion, relative to their future domestic arrangements. Waring had skilfully avoided all reference to the subject by quietly taking charge of things, with the assistance of Sallie and Phyllis, so that Ruth and her mother were now his guests rather than his tenants. But procrastination only made the subject more painful to Ruth, whose pride would not permit her to partake of his hospitality an hour longer than was necessary.

Assuming a business-like expression, she accosted the lieutenant one morning just as he was about leaving the house.

"If you will kindly give me a few moments of your time," she said, imperatively, "I would like to talk with you on a matter of business."

Now, for many days past Arthur Waring had been in the habit of bustling off, after an early breakfast, in fictitious efforts to catch phantom trains to various points of the compass, so that Ruth invariably missed him in the morning. And at night his visionary affairs kept him so late that he did not return to Graystone until after she had retired.



## Graystone

In this way he postponed the dreaded day.

He knew, from the sound of her footsteps overhead, when she would appear, and governed his movements accordingly. But what is man, dull, stupid man, in the hands of a woman? Mere clay, to be fashioned as she will! This morning Ruth had stepped lightly out of bed, and tip-toed around in her dainty bare feet, without making the slightest noise that would betray her movements to the deceitful Waring in his room below.

And she had caught him at the front door.

He made an excuse of pressing time, pulling out his watch to aid in the deception, but her calm dark eyes were upon him—and he surrendered.

"I am entirely at your disposal," he said, meekly.

They entered the library.

"I wanted to tell you," she began, bravely, "that we have made all our arrangements to leave—Graystone."

He controlled himself with remarkable firmness. This trembling girl was the betrothed of another. The pathetic little figure, now draped

## Graystone

in black, swayed by the storms of adversity, was nothing to him—nothing to him.

He even caught the jingle in his thoughts of that senility :

“ For if she be not for me,  
What care I for whom she be.”

As though a man loved a woman only because she loved him !

Heavens above ! A phonograph will give back the sound breathed into it. Would you fathom life to its depths ? Would you be like Petrarch—crowned poet-laureate, in royal garments, by a Roman senate ? Then love without returning love.

“ May I ask what your plans are for the future ?” Waring hazarded, with much timidity.

The sympathetic tone of his voice, betraying his loyally devoted heart, almost broke her spirit.

“ I would rather not——” she began, and then the curved lips trembled, her sorrowful eyes sought his in pleading entreaty,—she burst into tears.

## Graystone

“Ruth, my——”

“No! oh, no!” She glided gently from him.  
“You don’t understand.”

In a moment she was gone, while he, being only a man, and incapable of surmising the truth, concentrated his wrathful mind on the unconscious object irritating it.

Again, it was well for George Piggott that he was not visiting Graystone.

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## CHAPTER XIII

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*"Of Honeye and of Gaule in love there is store :  
The Honeye is much, but the Gaule is more."*

**A**RTHUR WARING buttoned up his coat and departed from Graystone, ostensibly to attend to business downtown. He did not assume the fictitious energy of the preceding day. Twice had he turned back towards the house, actuated by forebodings of impending loss. His usually erect, military poise was swayed by his wavering irresolution and the oppressive shadow of coming events. He walked as though he were approaching the Valley of Despair.

When he returned to Graystone in the evening, after what seemed to him an interminably long day, he found the house dark and gloomy, with only the faithful servants, Sallie and Phyllis, to keep him company.

As he walked mechanically down the wide,

## Graystone

dreary hall-way, he observed no evidences of that expectation and welcoming so dear to the heart of man.

The hearthstone in his library wore an air of desolation, and the fire-dogs seemed but cold metal castings.

The soul of his dwelling had departed.

With nervous apprehension he sought Sallie, and said, mournfully,—

“The—the—ladies have——”

“Done gone, Mars Arthur,” she gravely replied.

“Did they leave any—that is—are there any letters for me?” he went on, his heart sinking lower and lower, while he made a pretence of arranging his pipes on the little round table.

“Nothin’, ‘ceptin’ dis yere.” She handed him a letter, which was thin and small. Her honest face seemed apologetic for the size of it.

“Ah! Nothing more?” Waring put the diminutive letter with apparent carelessness into a side pocket. “You may serve dinner, Sallie,” he managed to say calmly, though his heart was rapidly beating.

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When Sallie had departed, he took the letter from his pocket, and read,—

“I forgot to tell you this morning that I am *not* engaged to Mr. George Piggott.”

That was all.

But, *mon Dieu!* the sudden expansiveness of things animate and inanimate! The gale of psychological impulse that swept through Graystone was enough to bang the doors and rouse the old family portraits into sensibility.

A dancing feeling of joy and emotion swelled the breast of Waring, and he laughed aloud and talked to himself in harmonious contentment.

Heavens! how little it takes to bring joy to man! If capricious, tormenting woman only knew how easily his vexed soul can be pacified and conquered by a fraction of kindness, a mere suspicion of consideration and attention, how universally might she rule supreme!

But a woman would rather be conquered than conquer. And thus life's jangles go merrily on.

Sallie also seemed to be influenced by the atmosphere of genial hilarity, for she found her-

## Graystone

self involuntarily breaking into a sort of cakewalk while serving the dinner. There was a rhythmic swing in her step which for style and dignified motion would compare favorably with the old Carolina standard.

"You have been working rather hard this winter," Waring began, in a sympathetic tone of voice.

Sallie stopped in her circles around the table and looked at him suspiciously.

"Yes, Mars Arthur," she replied, indifferently.

"I was thinking about sending you down to Rockingham for a vacation," he suggested.

Her eyes opened wide in astonishment, the whites showing in marked contrast with her ebony skin.

"I ain't gwine home, Mars Arthur?" she implored, breathlessly. "You knows I ain't gwine."

Visions of a high, rolling country, covered with fir-scented forests, a ruined mansion, and a little cabin, with old mammy, in her turban, sitting at the door, flashed through Sallie's mind. She could smell the "'lasses puddin',"

## Graystone

and the sweet potatoes frying in 'possum fat. She saw the yellow-legged pullets pecking and pecking. And then her ear seemed to catch the faint sound of a horn coming from the porch of the ruined mansion.

"Comin', comin'," she could hear old Adam responding.

"I ain't surely gwine home, Mars Arthur?" she beseeched him, the glad tears rolling down her black face.

"Yes; I am going to send you and Phyllis down to North Carolina for a month or two; so hurry and get ready," he added.

And then Sallie proceeded with much alacrity to clear off the dinner-table.

Over in their humble cottage Phyllis sat counting repeatedly a handful of bright pennies which Ruth had given to her. A large white and yellow cat of uncertain pedigree sat opposite to her on the floor, sleepily watching the operation.

"One, two,—dar's yours, pussy," and she deposited the coins between the cat's paws. "Three, four,—dem's mine," she continued.

Sallie then came rushing into the room like a



## Graystone

cyclone. She lifted Phyllis from the floor with a wild jerk, sending the pennies rolling in every direction, the cat seeking shelter under the table. The movement nearly dislocated the young pickaninny's loosely-jointed anatomy.

"You, Phyllis!" she cried, shaking the child with frantic glee until her eyes bulged with fright. Then she relaxed her grip. "Pooh baby," she said, laughing wildly. "Do you know whar you'se gwine?"

And then she began rocking back and forth, singing in measured tones a plantation melody,—

"Darkies know whar de best folks lib,—

Down in Rockingham.

'Nuff to eat 'nd some to gib,

Down in Rockingham.

Turkeys fly in de cabin doah,

Down in Rockingham.

Some gits fat 'nd some gits moah,

Down in Rockingham.

Come along, Darkies,

'Way down in Carolina.

You know,

We go,

Whar de best folks lib."

## Graystone

And Phyllis, under the influence of her mother's happiness, joined lustily in the chorus of the dozen or more verses.

The reflex action occurred at daybreak the next morning, when Arthur Waring racked his brain endeavoring to locate the Widow Martine and Ruth. The latter had evidently forgotten to mention her new address in the short note. Sallie would know it, no doubt. He shaved and dressed with unusual care, having made up his mind to call on Ruth and her mother that very day for the purpose of offering his friendly services in furthering their plans.

But Sallie had regained her usual dignity, and had little to communicate, excepting in answer to direct questions.

"She didn't say a word to me, Mars Arthur, 'bout whar she's gwine," she averred, during breakfast. "She jess done gib me dat note. 'Nd she looked so pale, I was afeerd th' pooh honey-bird——"

"But they must have said—something about where they were going," he interrupted, impatiently.

## Graystone

"'Fore de Lawd, Mars Arthur," affirmed the old woman, solemnly, "she jess gib me th' note and said——"

"There! I knew there was something." He waited, expectantly.

Sallie hesitated, with a slight show of irritation.

"'Twan't nothin' partickler."

"Well?"

"She done tell me to take good care of you——"

Waring looked up quickly. He knew the tender feeling in Sallie's heart on that special subject.

"You were not angry with Miss Ruth?" he asked, reproachfully.

"Not 'xactly."

Sallie was piling dishes on a big tray with great vigor, making considerable unnecessary noise.

"What did you say?" he demanded of his abashed servant.

"I allowed she couldn't teach me nothin' 'bout dat," she replied, doggedly.

He could get nothing more from her.

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As for Ruth, the great city had enveloped her in its confusing numbers. To Arthur Waring she was as completely lost as if she had strayed into a trackless wilderness.

For several days he roamed anxiously about the principal streets, looking vainly for the pathetic dark eyes whose expression filled his brain,—forgetting Graystone, forsaking his club; his thoughts centred on a single object.

One day he was aroused to his senses by a heavy hand laid upon his shoulder, and, turning, he recognized the smiling face of Doctor Fairlie.

“Hello, Artie, old boy! Why so pale, unhappy lover?”

The red-haired doctor was bristling with humor.

Waring looked annoyed. “I’m very busy to-day, Jack. I hope to call around—some—some time next week.”

He was bowing him off, but Fairlie caught him by the coat-sleeve.

“Indeed! Well, as I am not so—so blamed busy, you must come along with me to luncheon.”

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The doctor was of Scotch ancestry; withal, he was genial and sympathetic. Every boy in the Hill School, while he was in attendance there, had taken his advice at one time or another, and had gone on their several ways rejoicing. That was in his youth. But over many of them he retained his influence through manhood.

"You will go with me," he went on, still holding Waring's sleeve, "for a salad and a pint of Niersteiner. I have something to tell you about Miss Martine."

Waring turned on him a frightened countenance, and tried to look indifferent.

"I shall be glad to accept," he said, wearily.

Five minutes later they sat in the club café, discussing almost every subject under the sun but the one dearest to the heart of Waring.

After they had finished their lunch, and were about to separate, Waring found courage enough to say, in an apparently careless manner,—

"You spoke of Miss Martine?"

"Oh, by Jove! I quite forgot," exclaimed the doctor, fumbling in his pockets. "Here it is."

## Graystone

He pulled out a large square envelope, addressed in Ruth's well-known handwriting:

“JOHN FAIRLIE, M.D.,  
University Hospital,  
Philadelphia.”

It contained the following letter:

“DEAR DOCTOR FAIRLIE,—

“Would you like to join with us in renting a house in the central part of the city? My mother is an excellent housekeeper, and we would endeavor to make you comfortable. You could have the first floor for your offices. We would not require very much room. I hope this idea will impress you favorably, and that you will not think I am asking too much,—for you and Mr. Waring have been so kind to us. Hoping you will think this a good plan, I am,

“Sincerely,

“RUTH MARTINE.

“P.S.—I want to be a trained nurse, and I know you can help me.

“R. M.”

“You will find the substance in the postscript,” said the experienced physician, laughing.  
“The rest of the letter is purely tentative.”

## Graystone

"What answer are you going to send?" queried Waring, with great eagerness.

"Decline, with thanks, of course," said the wary bachelor.

He was three years older than Waring, but thirty years wiser.

"Why not consider it?" suggested Waring.

"Simply because I have not the ducats to set up a Walnut Street establishment and support two penniless women. That's why." And he glanced through his spectacles with depressing significance.

"But suppose," the lieutenant persisted, "I were to contribute?" Waring felt the spell of the professional eye upon him and stopped abruptly.

"In that case," said the enlightened doctor, calmly thrusting his arm through that of his friend as they walked slowly into the smoking-room, "in that case we will consider the matter together."

Then the two old bachelors grew confidential, and before they had finished their cigars they had in their own minds settled the question of the immediate future of Ruth and her mother.

## Graystone

"I will answer her letter at once," concluded the doctor, with much kindly enthusiasm. "What is her address?"

Waring turned the envelope over and over, and then examined the letter page by page.

But, womanlike, Ruth had forgotten to write it down.



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## CHAPTER XIV

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*“ And losse of her, whose love as lyfe I wayd,  
Those weary wanton toyes away did wyte.”*

UPID'S arrow had entered Arthur Waring's heart rather late in life, and had found there an abiding-place long prepared for its reception. False passions, it is true, had previously taken root in its tender recesses; but their flaunting pretensions had been uprooted and cast aside. For there is only one true love; and blessed are they to whom it comes. Many seek it and never find it. It gives no warning of its approach, it makes no ostentatious announcement of its arrival, but like the gentle rain from heaven, or as a refreshing breeze, or as a ray of hope to a despairing soul, so love comes,—sweet, immortal, precious love.

There are many who go through life—as friends, betrothed, and married—in the delusion

## Graystone

that they have found love. Poor fools! Love is never found,—it comes.

And thus it came to Arthur Waring,—near middle age,—and found in his heart a congenial and permanent dwelling-place.

After Ruth Martine's departure from Graystone, Waring was possessed of one idea, and that was to follow her—around the world if necessary—and to find her. Her letter to Doctor Fairlie had thrown the lieutenant into an excess of joy, which was turned into feverish anxiety when he realized that without her address he was as far off as ever. Over and over again he read the business-like letter written in her dear familiar hand, hoping to find some trace of her whereabouts; but his heart sank lower each time he approached the end, and he felt that his weary quest must begin again.

He handed the letter back to the doctor, betraying his feelings by a deep sigh.

"I love her, Jack," said Waring, with confiding frankness.

"Lucky Miss Martine," replied the doctor, with emphasis.

"Why lucky?" asked Arthur, innocently.

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"Because you love her." The jealous doctor flicked the ashes from his cigar and looked determined.

"Hm!" said Waring, in deep abstraction. Adding, with embarrassment, "I am not sure—that is, I don't believe Miss Martine will ever marry——"

"You," added the doctor.

"I never expect to marry——"

"Any other woman," supplied the wise physician, laughing. "Oh, Artie, you are such an old boy. Any one can see through you." The doctor could scarcely refrain from patting his friend on the back.

"I don't understand the—the connection," Waring replied, with some dignity, rising from his chair in much confusion.

"No!" Fairlie turned around in his chair and looked at the lieutenant critically. "I will explain: Had I answered you in any other way, a friendship that has lasted twenty years would have been rudely shaken, to say the least. Now, for example, suppose I had suggested the possibility of Miss Martine's marriage to her fiancée? Hm! Mr. Pig——"

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"She is not engaged to him," interrupted Waring, with so much decision that his friend smiled again.

"She has so informed you, no doubt?" queried the doctor.

"Miss Martine has intimated as much to me," said the other, stiffly.

"Precisely." Doctor Fairlie deliberately crossed his legs, placed his elbows on the arms of his chair, and brought the tips of his fingers together. "And what other symptoms would you have the patient—er—that is, the young lady exhibit in order to prove that—that your affection is—say, acceptable?" he asked, seriously.

Waring recalled the eventful evening in the library at Graystone and took comfort; but doubts arose in his mind.

"I am not at all certain that Miss Martine cares anything for me," he said, sadly, moving towards the door.

The doctor followed him, and they passed out to the street.

"Where are you going?" asked Fairlie, impatiently. He wished that all young girls with

## Graystone

bold black eyes were at the bottom of the Delaware River.

"I don't exactly know," Waring answered, absently. "If Miss Martine should write again, will you let me know?" Then he turned and walked away with lagging steps and stooping shoulders.

The doctor, his Scotch blood at fever-heat, started away in another direction, pounding the pavement with exaggerated thumps of his heavy cane.

"The hussy!" he muttered, angrily; "the impudent hussy! Trained nurse, indeed! And a man like Waring breaking his heart about you. I would like to train you—you——"

"I beg your pardon, doctor."

Ruth's laughing black eyes were looking straight into his. He had almost walked over her in his blinding rage.

"I am *so* glad we met," she continued, greeting him, cheerfully. "I wrote you a letter—on business, but forgot to enclose my address." She held out a card modestly. "When you receive it, I shall expect a prompt answer."

## Graystone

Then she quickly joined the passing crowd of matinee-goers, and was lost to view.

The astonished doctor looked after the receding winsome figure, and then glanced at the card in his hand.

"I'll be hanged, if I send you one!" he exclaimed, savagely, and with cold-blooded determination he tore the card into a dozen bits.

Hope was at the same moment whispering to the distracted Waring, "She will write again."

But he had serious doubts and misgivings. He knew the proud, sensitive nature of the young girl; and imagined what her feelings would be in case she received no answer to her application for help. For that was practically what her letter amounted to. "She would never write again," he murmured, disconsolately, as he reclined in his easy-chair in the library at Graystone.

And when he sat by the open library window that peaceful afternoon, the flowers were unfolding on every side. The old oaks and chestnuts that had shaded him in his infancy were breaking into leafy blossoms. The same kinds

## Graystone

of flowers were blooming, as fragrant as in the previous spring, when Ruth was there. The chill of winter had vanished before awakening nature, a delicious odor of violets and arbutus came gently to him, and the sweet calm of the evening soothed his tired brain.

But Waring's heart was heavy during this lovely month of May. He experienced hours of bitter grief, and Nature seemed to have no balm for his wound. As the days rolled on, he alone knew the full measure of his sadness. The twittering birds, the budding trees, the rippling creek, and the rustling leaves afforded no consolation to his noble heart.

"Never!" he groaned, with deep emotion. "Ah, Sweetbrier, dear heart—dear little Sweetbrier, where are you now?"

While he uttered her childish name there came to him visions of her tender form swaying in a wilderness of strange things—all rough and ravenous.

His head bent lower. In his vision he saw fleeing phantoms, and he vainly wandered in pursuit of Ruth, amidst the wild beatings of a dreadful storm. Bareheaded and drenched by

## Graystone

the pitiless rain, through groaning forests and terrified creatures he followed with wavering steps the sound of a familiar voice calling to him out of the darkness. At last he came to what seemed to him a mighty river,—it was the creek which ran past the edge of his meadow, now swollen far beyond its usual limits. And the black water was rushing violently along, constantly growing higher and higher.

“The creek is up! There is no other way.” He heard a mocking laugh.

The voice grew faint. It was receding deeper and deeper into the forest. He uttered a cry of despair as he rushed frantically towards the old bridge.

It was nowhere to be seen! In its place was a torrent of muddy water rushing madly down the valley.

“Ruth! darling Ruth!” he called out, as the waters closed about him in his desperate struggle through the treacherous current.

“Blessed Saviour!” he prayed, and in a moment the storm had ceased and the air became soft and warm, with a crimson radiance.

Together they wandered along a beautiful



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road, lined on either side with rows of evenly trimmed poplar-trees. The broad avenue led them through miles of finely cultivated farms, in which they saw groups of men and women, some ploughing, some planting, all apparently happy and contented. It was enveloped in an atmosphere heavy with the perfume of crimson clover.

"*Bon soir, m'sieu,*" was heard on every side.

They continued walking until they reached a garden surrounded by a high stone wall. Entering, they seated themselves in the shade of a wide-spreading linden-tree. Beyond were the ruins of an old abbey, through which the afternoon sun cast lingering rays of golden light. And as he spoke to her of the danger through which he had passed, Ruth turned on him her loving black eyes, filled with wondering pity.

"Dear old friend," she murmured.

And again his arms were about her, again their lips met——

He awoke with a start, and shivered in the chill of a rainy night.

Through an open window came the hoarse

## Graystone

croaking of frogs and the moist scent of flowers and new grass.

"Ruth, come back!" he cried in his despairing loneliness.

But in the silent house only the clock, measuring out life's moments with remorseless regularity, could be heard striking the midnight hour.

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## CHAPTER XV

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*"Nowe dead bee is, and lyeth wrapt in leade  
And all bys passing skil with him is fledde."*

**I**T is but a comparatively short distance from the great city of Philadelphia, with its comfortable dwellings, lofty business structures, shaded squares, and broad streets, to the unattractive coal regions in the Allegheny Mountains; and it is only a step further from the pure air and balmy scent of the surrounding mountain forests to the nauseous vapors of the inside workings of the mines.

The sun never enters these subterranean tunnels, and there exists no vegetation excepting yellowish fungus growths on the slowly-rotting timbers. The deep-seated seams of coal are formed by the carboniferous remains of countless millions of plants which once thrived in the warm atmosphere of a tropical climate. The vegetation that contributed to these forma-

## Graystone

tions possibly flourished along the undulating, velvety, green banks of some prehistoric lake, and swayed responsive to every passing breeze. Some drooped and died; others grew to be trees, great giants, with stately trunks and spreading limbs, towering aloft in verdant grandeur. Buried under the accumulations of ages are found the remains of those lofty trees and tender plants, their branches and leaves twisted and crushed and compressed into coal. And from this compact mass issue malignant gases, poisonous and deadly to man.

In the gloomy depths of an old coal-mine at Acton, when the outside world was basking in the sunlight of a May morning, a man was creeping cautiously along the main heading. In one hand he carried a small, flickering lamp, and in the other a short-handled pick, with which at various intervals he tapped the overhead rock, and when the strokes indicated either solid or hollow sounds, he would stop and closely examine the side walls and timbering. He was a man of about twenty-five years of age, with a pale face and a strong, well-developed frame. As he passed the flame of the

## Graystone

lamp slowly along the walls and coverings of the mine, its yellow light revealed his fine profile and muscular figure.

In addition to a powerful physique, which had helped him around many sharp corners during the previous five years, there blazed in his eyes such an expression of determination that few men ventured to oppose him. He shunned the society of women; but to the children Dick Black, the mine-boss, was a genuine hero.

For five years he had been located in the little mining town of Acton, where he had first secured work as a driver in the old mine. From that humble beginning he had advanced rapidly to the positions of miner, road-man, and mine-boss. His name was becoming famous over that whole region as the one best fitted to represent the miners as a leader and the operators as an adviser. His honesty of purpose won for him the entire confidence of both employer and fellow-worker.

Upon that particular morning Dick Black had made an unusually critical inspection of the walls and coverings. The bright coal seams

## Graystone

reflected his lamp's rays, and to his experienced eyes laid bare their faults and imperfections. Occasionally particles of slate would drop from the roof, making a noise that was intensified by the grave-like silence into reverberating echoes. These bits he picked up, after which he carefully examined the strata from which they had fallen. And as he passed slowly along he heard the drip, drip, drip of water in a ceaseless, monotonous rhythm.

The mine-boss continued to carefully scrutinize every heading and gangway. Not even a bending timber or a buckling prop escaped his searching eyes.

A fine old mine was the Acton No. 1, with its six feet of clean coal and not a knife-edge of slate from floor to roof.

Ah, the roof,—that shattery, treacherous roof!

It was full of pots and shelly stuff, stretching overhead like a canopy of death, now and again crashing mercilessly on the quivering mortals caught beneath it.

Dick Black knew all about it. Not a fissure or crack on its surface could change without

## Graystone

being detected by his vigilant eyes, and with a stout prop of timber he would beat it back into subjection. Cautiously he glided along the dark entry far into the old workings.

Is he mad? Has long-suppressed grief worn out his brain-tissue at last? God in heaven! Man! *that* way leads through "the graveyard"! There a dozen men have already found death in the falling roof's embrace.

The miners could not be persuaded to work in "the graveyard," and it had been cut off, abandoned.

The valiant, almost scornful poise of Black's head indicated his spirit as he stooped and passed through the swinging door-way into the noxious air of the old workings. He knew exactly how long he could live in the heavy carbonic acid gas, he was familiar with the cross-cuts where he could breathe a purer air, and the old air-shaft for exit, if necessary. The treacherous roof was now ominously quiet. There appeared to be no danger.

Beyond "the graveyard" lay a hundred acres of the big six-foot seam of coal, and this was the only way to reach it.

## Graystone

Dick would accomplish it. Others had tried and failed. But what was that to him? Success meant to do something every one else believed could not be done. He would be successful. That was the aim of his life.

The flame of his lamp shortened and burned close to the wick. A danger signal! His head was throbbing and he felt oppressed and uncomfortable.

"Bad air, and plenty of it," he growled, in a strong Warwickshire accent. Then he raised the lamp-wick and continued to creep doggedly along the slimy, ill-smelling walls. The spongy fire-clay floor was oozing up towards the ugly roof,—twin brothers in deviltry.

Tapping the roof gently, he heard a hollow, uncertain sound off in the darkness, and then a far-away, creeping noise, nerve-racking, shrill.

Suddenly there came a deep, menacing, impetuous rumble, followed by a chaotic crashing of the destructive roof. The now released tumultuous gases spread around in frenzied agitation.

There was total darkness.



## Graystone

Ah, villanous roof! Would you take the life of Richard Black?

Not yet, not yet!

Bravely he faced the blast of dirt-laden vapors, and with hands outstretched felt his way slowly back through "the graveyard." No light now; not even the tiny flame of his lamp. The striking of a match might—God alone knew *what* evil spirits that crumbling fall of the roof had released from their rocky fissures! A spark might start them into fiery whirlwinds. At first he had no thought for himself. Who would care? His wife? *His* wife! He laughed harshly.

He was thinking of the men in the new workings. They have wives and little children. Ah, what sorrow—what sorrow their's would be!

The sweat was dropping down his face. His eyes were straining into the darkness. He wondered what *might* happen should he lose his reason for one instant,—should he make a mistake and turn the wrong way.

Then he struggled on.

The air became heavier with noxious im-

## Graystone

purities. His face grew ghastly pale, and he gasped frantically for breath.

Death is hovering near "the graveyard." Already his clammy touch is enveloping a precious life.

What does it matter?

With trembling, extended arms he staggered forward, stumbled, and fell on his knees into a strata of carbonic acid gas.

Now he was drowning, and into his confused brain came visions of green fields and thatched cottages surrounded by high, flowering hedges. Into his expanded, quivering nostrils came the scent of the luscious red clover of dear old England. Slowly over his scornful, resolute face there settled an expression of eternal, blessed repose.

Then, with a loud groan, he fell forward—against a yielding wooden door—into the purer air of the main heading.

Into life and safety!

A small trapper-boy, on guard at the air-course opposite, rapped sharply on the iron rails, and the miners came running from every direction.

## Graystone

"Good God!" said one in amazement, "he's been in 'the graveyard'!"

And they carried him out to daylight.

In Acton everybody works for "the company,"—the men in the mines, the boys with the men; and when a group of men comes straggling down the dirty street from the drift-mouth, carrying a prostrate form between them, the women, already warned by instinct, begin to cry, while the children cling to their skirts and whimper in unison.

All those, however, who thanked God that the little party did not stop at *their* door felt a keen sorrow when they learned that the silent figure was that of Richard Black.

While some of the women followed to his lonely house, others, at the men's bidding, ran in haste for a doctor.

But the fresh air of the mountains was all that the mine-boss required. When the doctor arrived Dick Black had regained his usual vigor, and was already directing each man what to do, the women having been politely requested to leave.

## Graystone

"And you, Tommy," said Black to the small trapper, who stood amazed at the resurrection, "run down to the post-office and bring me the letters."

When Tommy returned he handed to Richard Black a large, official-looking envelope, having

BROWN & Co.

embossed in big red letters in the upper left-hand corner.

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## CHAPTER XVI

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*"And who can count?" a thirteenth said  
With patience to forbear the offered bowie."*

**R**ICHARD BLACK'S house was a small, one-storied, wooden affair, having two rooms, one of which he used as an office and the other as a bed-room. He lived entirely alone, and occupied most of his time in working. He had read that it was proper to divide the day into three periods of eight hours each,—one for sleep, one for work, and one for play,—and it occurred to him that the last mentioned period was entirely unnecessary and could easily be merged into the second, thus giving him two periods of eight hours each for work. At irregular intervals, when protesting nature claimed his attention, he would prepare his own food ; and he managed to attend to his trifling wants without the assistance of women.

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The past was abhorrent to him, and he endeavored by constant occupation to bury it in oblivion. He had a grim determination to rise above the humble calling into which Fate had so roughly thrown him.

He worked in the mines all day, and at night, when the town of Acton was wrapped in slumber, a light could be seen faintly glimmering through his office window while he studied the intricate problems of ventilation and kindred subjects. As a result of such persevering and continuous application, he soon successfully passed the examinations, and was granted a mine-boss's certificate. Among his duties as mine-boss he included those of engineer, superintendent, and general manager, and he was capable of fulfilling all of them. For the company that employed him was poor, and the legitimate profits on coal were distressingly small.

Black's position might be likened to that combination of tools which contains a gimlet, a screw-driver, a chisel, and a brad-awl in one handle.

The minutest details of the operations around Acton were known to him, from the splitting

## Graystone

of an air current in the straight heading of a mine to the domestic and social happenings of the inhabitants.

To be sure it did not require much power of observation to learn all that occurred in the village of Acton. There was very little domestic privacy in that bare and unsheltered spot. There were no secluded corners or vine-enclosed bowers. It was one of those dreary, unpainted settlements in the heart of the coal regions,—inhabited mostly by sad-faced foreigners and their families,—a blemish on the fair face of the great commonwealth of Pennsylvania. It presented a squalid appearance, with its wooden church, two rival taverns, and several rectangular blocks of shutterless, weather-stained houses, which constituted its narrow, dirty streets. The inhabitants displayed spasmodic signs of life twice each month—on pay days—and the rest of the time the town appeared to lie dormant in its lethargic ugliness.

Acton possessed no old homestead with a romantic past, nor was there any apparent bright future in store for it. The only thought was of the grim, hard-working present. When the

## Graystone

coal in the surrounding mountains should become exhausted, the town would be deserted. There was no other reason, after such a contingency, why it should continue to exist.

As has been stated, it was five years since Richard Black had located in Acton. He was then a young man with an expression of care on his pale face; but as that was a condition common to all who lived in Acton, it attracted no particular attention. It soon became known that he was an emigrant from England; but he kept his own counsel, never frequented either of the rival taverns, and as far as possible shunned the society of women. For this neglect the maids of the town revenged themselves. It was whispered among them that there must be an evil past to the young man's life. He was no miner. He was so different from them in his speech and bearing. But when such rumors came to the ears of the men, they only laughed, and told the gossiping females to count the blue powder-marks in the white skin of the young fellow's face and they could easily guess the number of years he had toiled under ground.



## Graystone

Both the men and the women were right.

The unhappy past of Richard Black has been related in the story of Richard Piggott. Why recount its disappointments and sorrows? He had become reconciled to the idea that he was marked by Fate to bear a burden of grief; that joy and happiness had fled from him forever; and that his journey through life must be unaided and alone.

A weaker man would have yielded to such depressing moods and temptations, offering them to a benign Providence as an excuse for his downward progress. But Richard Piggott—or Richard Black, as he now chose to call himself—displayed a stubborn resistance to Fate and a tenacious pride in his own strength, fighting against the adverse current of his life, and making progress slowly upward.

He charged none of his misfortunes to Providence. From his youth he possessed a humane consideration for his fellow-beings, a deep reverence for the Supreme Ruler, and a steady inclination to do right, which always brought him back to the straight path whenever he chanced to wander from it.

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When Richard Piggott left his ruined home in England, he carried with him an angry mistrust in women which seemed to close forever the portals of his loving heart. For months after his arrival in Acton he worked hard and avoided close association with his fellow-men. Then, gradually his strong nature led him gently back from feelings of despair to those of endeavor, and in his daily work he found comfort, and even the dawning light of ambition. His efforts were stimulated by his environments. In the new country to which he had been suddenly transported the past became unreal and shadowy; and the keen edge of his sorrow was blunted by his rough, novel experiences.

Everything in Acton was so different from his native village of Ashborne, with its shady lanes and cultivated fields. Here, in the wild recesses of the Allegheny Mountains, his strenuous fight for the mere necessities of life had no relation with the course of instruction taught him in the classic shades of Oxford, in Miller's School,—which had once been to him a model institution, the seat of all learning, and the fountain head of lofty aspirations.

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The vine-covered walls, the little chapel,—which was reached by a winding path through fields of blossoming clover,—where the Reverend Miller delivered himself of comforting homilies, in dulcet tones of faultless rhetoric, coaxing his pupils up the easy slopes of genteel mediocrity. There was a vast difference between mellow existence in the shadow of the ancient colleges at Oxford and the scraggy, hard-featured life in Acton. Forests stretching for miles in every direction, and as yet seldom trodden by the foot of man; deep, gloomy solitudes; sharp, jagged profiles of rocky landscape; impetuous streams, rushing with unbridled force down steep ravines; patches of fire-swept desolation, and the blackened stumps of trees; pale-faced men hurrying along rough, stony roads, and disappearing suddenly into the bowels of the earth; box-like houses, where the men ate in silence and slept in weary discomfort, and where the women worked all day in hopeless monotony.

But with ambition came hope. And it was at this opportune time that the letter from Brown & Co., of New York, came to Richard

## Graystone

Black. It was type-written, and the notation in one corner—"Dictated by G. P."—gave no intimation to the unsuspecting mine-boss that he held in his hand the first letter received by him in five years from his brother, George Piggott!

There were many in the vicinity of Acton who knew much of the smooth-talking Mr. Brown, for he had some time previously appeared in their midst and taken options on their lands. There were a few who cursed the day they first saw him; but the rest looked on in mute surprise while Brown & Co. took possession of the surrounding country with a rapacity that apparently knew no limit.

The small disbursements of money made to the needy owners of the land seemed to them enormous; and there were rumors of extensive operations contemplated by mysterious wealthy capitalists under the name of Brown & Co., which grew by repetition to immense proportions. Even the level-headed Richard Black felt a certain awe and respect for the unknown origin of the stream of gold which was soon to vitalize Acton and the surrounding hills.

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His coal-stained hands trembled as he read :

“ Your name has been suggested to us as the one best fitted to assume charge of our operations near Acton ; therefore we would be pleased to have you consider the question of your acting as our Superintendent, at a salary of three thousand dollars per annum.”

It might have been the after-effects of Richard's experience with the noxious gases of “ the graveyard ” still benumbing his brain ; or perhaps it was the realization of success coming to crown his efforts after years of bitter struggle ; or it may have been only physical weakness induced by an ill-nurtured body, or possibly all of them combined, that caused a deathly pallor to overspread his resolute face and the proud, stubborn man to sink low on bended knees.

Outside, the gray mellowness of a moonlight night enveloped the hard-featured village in a silvery radiance, smoothing its sharp angles into rounded lines of beauty. The tall forest trees

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waved their top branches in the balmy southern breeze, whispering the promise of spring. A light still gleamed from the windows of Richard Black's house on the hill-side, while the miners of Acton were sleeping.

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## CHAPTER XVII

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*"These wizards welter in wealth's waves  
Pampered in pleasures deepe."*

THE firm of Brown & Co. had passed through four eventful years of business life.

At first it seemed as if the sanguine Mr. Brown's ten million dollar "proposition" would, like a water-logged craft, sink by its own weight.

For some time previous to the launching of the venture there had been a gradual shrinkage of the firm's cash in bank,—carefully posted in the large new ledger under the head of "Sundries,"—and it therefore became necessary that the proposition should be "pulled off" at once, as Mr. Brown expressed it; and in the manipulation of the transaction that individual had proved himself an expert. His wide and varied acquaintance with brokers and politicians of a

## Graystone

shady character was of such a personal and confidential nature that he had encountered little difficulty in persuading them "to cut the melon," so that his friends received a large and juicy slice of the red part, while the innocent public bought the green rind. The financiers had induced some wealthy bankers to invest in the bonds of Brown & Co., which were apparently amply secured by a first mortgage covering their Allegheny coal lands. The politicians, on the other hand, had promised their shadowy influence in return for substantial allotments of the common stock.

So the top-heavy corporation of Brown & Co., with ten million dollars of capital stock, had been launched on its slender ways into the financial sea, making a splash which caused ripples to extend to its most distant shores.

Visions of the days in the firm's early history came to George Piggott as he sat alone in his luxurious apartments.

He recalled the day he drew the check on their meagre balance in bank which had practically closed the account.

The money had been used to defray the



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expenses of a widely-circulated advertisement, which stated, in addition to various other inducements for investors, that "George Piggott, Esquire, capitalist, of Ashbourne, England," was one of the promoters and directors in the new company.

He remembered, with an irritable frown, the many days of anxious suspense, during which time the principals in the firm of Brown & Co. had economically taken their symposium of pie and milk at noon each day, painfully conscious of the fact that it would be difficult to pay for even so modest a feast unless their plans matured favorably.

Then the time arrived when the proposition was to be floated on the treacherous waves of the stock-exchange, where if it ran against the rocks of unpopularity it would sink forever. Mr. Brown believed that success or failure was merely a question of auspicious weather. That if the skies were lowering, or the air surcharged with heaviness, the scheme would inevitably fail. On certain days the speculators bite at every dangling bait, like hungry fish leaping after tempting flies. Then again, without any

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apparent cause, there are days when they cannot be induced to buy stock in any company, however bright its prospects may be.

Mr. Brown was probably one of the most experienced observers of stock-exchange conditions in the whole land. He knew the habits of the addle-headed variety of financial fishes so well that when he selected a day to go a-fishing he always felt confident of making a large haul.

And in this instance he made no mistake. As soon as his lines were set, the investors came in crowds,—men and women, old and young, pushing and jostling each other in the frantic rush to buy the stock of Brown & Co. They came in such numbers that the bait was soon exhausted. The capital stock of Brown & Co. was over-subscribed for and the corporation safely launched upon the open sea of success.

Money came to them from men and women who demanded the privilege of buying their stock.

As a consequence of that glorious beginning money filled the pockets of the members of the old firm, for it was being passed over the pol-

## Graystone

ished counters of the new corporation as fast as the clerks could handle it.

The rise of George Piggott was phenomenal. The shabby old offices, with their well-worn furniture, had given place to more sumptuous quarters, involving increased expenditures. A freckled-faced boy, formerly the only employee, now occupied a position on the outer edge of a circle which comprised a full complement of corporation officials, with their assistants. Prosperity was in the air. It was displayed in the velvet carpets and in the heavy lounges and Bank of England chairs finely upholstered in leather. It gleamed on the shining tops of mahogany desks, and was reflected in plate-glass partitions.

George Piggott's personal arrangements had undergone a change even more pronounced.

He had emerged from the obscurity of a stuffy bed-room in a cheap boarding-house to the splendor of a suite of apartments in a fashionable up-town dwelling, where he reposed in the lap of luxury. Upon the recommendation of some of Mr. Brown's friends he had been admitted to one of the popular clubs, whose

## Graystone

large and varied membership was disposed to wink at the admission of any one who could pay his dues—and his losses in the intellectual game of draw poker.

Society also—of a certain kind—began to smile invitingly on this rising Napoleon of the coal trade, and the lusty son of “old Piggott” soon found himself participating in social functions the grandeur of which his humble parent had never dreamed.

Fortune had surely smiled upon George Piggott. He was already a rich man. His mind revelled in a day-dream of still greater affluence as in silk dressing-gown and slippers he reclined in the uphostered depths of a great arm-chair.

A silver pot of coffee, flanked by a breakfast set of exquisite Sèvres china, stood upon the table beside him. He poured some of the coffee into a small cup and sipped it, alternating with whiffs of an Egyptian cigarette. His eyes roamed around the superbly furnished room, and he exclaimed in amazed wonder,—

“Good Lord! Am I dreaming?”

The effect of the furnishing was rich and beautiful. The lower portions of the walls

## Graystone

were panelled in wood, and were higher up decorated in brown and gold. The ceiling was of massive gilt stucco-work. The windows were draped with folds of heavy red and bronze-tinted velvet curtains, which partially covered large panes of solid plate glass. Double inside shutters admitted a subdued light and prevented the noises of the street from entering the room.

On one side of the apartment stood a large mantel-piece supported by two carved female figures, and above it was placed a magnificent mirror of bevelled glass. It was an October morning, and the outside air was cool enough to make enjoyable a fire of selected drift-wood which blazed with many-colored flames in an oval-shaped, brass-encased fire-place. Heavy brackets jutted out from the walls in the form of miniature dragons and mythical monsters, and between them hung bright-colored paintings of naked cupids and venuses.

Breakfast was being served to the possessor of this elegance and luxury by the impassive Henri.

This smooth-faced Frenchman was an excellent servant, and he moved about with a dex-

## Graystone

terity born of long experience. His carefully regulated manners were somewhat irritating to his employer, who always imagined he could detect a veiled smile beneath his impenetrable face that implied an air of galling condescension.

"*M'sieur* will himself eat *chez lui*. No?" Henri said, bowing respectfully.

"Eh! Damn the French!" exclaimed George.

"*M'sieur* will himself dine at home. Yes?" explained the man.

George caught the sound of his native tongue and breathed more freely. It had been his custom to conciliate his valet by liberal tips whenever he spoke in the French language. Now he felt that such familiarity was not becoming in a gentleman. He was conscious of a feeling of embarrassed restraint whenever Henri was in the room. There was a peculiar air about the man. He did everything so easily, with such imperturbability. If he would only get nervous or fidgety, and break something. It would be a relief.

"I will dine at the club," George replied, in

## Graystone

a dignified manner, calculated to impress his servant with a sense of his importance.

"*Oui, m'sieur*," answered Henri, as he quietly cleared away the breakfast things. Then he placed a pair of walking-shoes before the fire, and carefully arranged his master's coat, hat, and umbrella.

He knew exactly what was needed.

George's assumed hauteur vanished after the man left the room. He felt relieved, and hurriedly bolting the door, stretched himself upon the couch, yawned, and began whistling an air from "*Iolanthe*." It was nearly ten o'clock. But George decided that there was no particular reason why he should go to his office that morning. Brown could attend to whatever was necessary, and his secretary would answer the letters.

He was debating in his mind the momentous question as to which would be the most appropriate attire to wear that day,—a gray suit with a red necktie, or a dark blue suit with a black tie,—when he heard a gentle knock on the door.

Hastily arising, he crossed the room and opened it.

## Graystone

Henri stood in the doorway. In his hand he held a small silver tray, upon which had been laid a visiting-card.

*"Pardon, m'sieur, mais, madame et mademoiselle——"*

George took the card and read:



MISS MARTINE

Then he forgot his haughtiness for a moment, and he excitedly pulled the decorous Henri by the arm.

"A tall young lady with dark eyes?" he demanded, in much agitation.

*"Mais, oui, m'sieur, viz ze odder old woman, yes,"* answered the surprised foreigner, in a confused manner.

"Old woman! What kind of an old woman?" And George wished that the French language did not exist.



## Graystone

Henri made an exaggerated gesture of breadth and thickness.

"*Oui, m'sieur, comme ça,*" he said, gravely, and departed with an even, stately tread.

George detected a faint perfume of wild roses clinging to the little white card which he still held in his hand,—a reminder of the country, of green fields and trees, of flowers and—of Ruth.

A smile of gratified vanity overspread his full round face, and he had the assurance to say to himself, "Ruth Martine,—after me!" Then he viewed his appearance in the great mirror over the mantel-piece and carefully adjusted his red necktie.

"I wonder whether—er—she is in—interested in me," he mused, as he completed his toilet and went down-stairs.

When he arrived in the large reception-room, Ruth Martine advanced towards him with a graceful step. He stopped a moment to notice the beautiful contour of her fully developed figure, her glorious black eyes, and her white teeth, now framed in a charming friendly smile, and at that moment the tawdry furniture and

## Graystone

all his worldly possessions appeared to him as so much pasteboard and tinsel when compared with her loveliness.

"You remember my mother, of course," Ruth said, with an easy familiarity, and indicating the position of the Widow Martine by a motion of her hand.

George Piggott bowed stiffly. He looked at the rosy-cheeked old lady and was silent. He realized at once that, while Ruth would grace the head of his table, her mother would not be at all acceptable.

"What a man you've grown to be, sure!" said Mrs. Martine, encouragingly.

"Quite out of our class," said Ruth, with a challenge in her mischievous eyes.

"I am more than—surprised—it—it—has been—so—long," he finally stammered. He felt that Ruth was reading his very inmost thoughts.

"It would have been still longer," she said, conclusively; "but we were obliged to call—on business."

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## CHAPTER XVIII

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*"How fall's it, then, we no merrier bene,  
Ylike as others, girt in gawdy greene."*

WHEN Ruth Martine wrote to Doctor Fairlie asking his assistance in forwarding her plans, she had done so after mature deliberation. The fact that he was such an intimate friend of Arthur Waring's at first seemed an insuperable objection to her scheme; but when she reflected that her letter also told of her avowed determination to become a trained nurse, it appeared to her that it would be sufficient notice to Mr. Waring that she had not taken him seriously. With more or less impatience she waited several days for an answer from the doctor; but when the days lengthened into weeks, and still no word came to her from either Doctor Fairlie or his friend Lieutenant Waring, her impatience changed into indignation. To have her care-

## Graystone

fully-considered propositions treated with utter indifference, with absolute silence, was more than her high-spirited nature could bear, and she therefore resolved to endeavor to work out her plans without assistance from any one. Then the question of ways and means came up for solution, and had been disposed of by her mother obtaining a situation as housekeeper for an elderly widower in New York City, while Ruth attended a training-school there, and prepared herself for her life's work.

It is not necessary to dwell at great length upon this period of Ruth's life. The small amounts of money received from her mother added to her own scanty savings barely sufficed to pay the necessary expenses of her training. She preserved, however, a steadiness of purpose and an earnestness in performing the duties of her chosen occupation that favorably impressed all with whom she came in contact. In due time she acquired a proficiency which enabled her to secure remunerative employment, and with it that sense of independence without which no man or woman can be entirely happy.

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As Ruth had previously remarked to George Piggott, her call was purely on a matter of business.

"I have heard," she continued, in a matter-of-fact way, "that the corporation of Brown & Co. has contributed a large sum towards the building of a miners' hospital in Acton, and I wish you to give me a letter of recommendation for the position of matron."

George watched Ruth's expressive, eager face with admiration, and then glanced towards her mother.

"I shall be only too happy to do anything in my power," he said. "But don't you know it requires some—er—education or—training, I believe, before——"

"Oh, I am sure I have the necessary qualifications to fill the position," Ruth interrupted, sweetly.

"You, yes—but—but——"

He looked helplessly at the Widow Martine, who was comfortably seated.

"It's not *me*," she interjected, pleasantly. "Ruth would have it that she must be independent,—so she's become a trained nurse. And

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she's a rare good one, so they all tell me," she added, by way of recommendation.

George looked at the demure young aspirant for matronly honors, and he thought her sweet dignity would be more becoming if it were surrounded by the gilded frame of wealth, her old faded suit replaced by a gown of black velvet, and the plain hat by a crescent of diamonds fixed in her dark hair.

"Why in the world did you do *that*, Ruth?" he asked, in a tone of disapproval.

George was injudicious. For, be she right or wrong, a woman will not permit a man to question her motives. Possibly she never had a motive; that all her actions, being the result of impulse, cannot be analyzed; or peradventure, being a woman is of itself a good and sufficient reason for whatever she may do or say.

Ruth's bright eyes flashed scornfully in the subdued light of the richly-furnished room.

"One has to eat in order to live," she replied, loath to unfold her life's ambition to so unresponsive a nature. "I will only ask you to endorse this paper." She handed him a letter

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from a member of the faculty of the college which she had attended.

George took the paper from her hand and carried it to a massive writing-desk which stood near one of the windows.

"I will do *that*, of course," he said, as he attached his signature to the document; "but I am sorry you thought it necessary to—to"—he was going to say "lower yourself," but he checked himself in time—"work so hard." He looked up into the clear face bending over him, but he saw there no indication that his sympathetic tone of voice had made any impression. In that particular his old sweetheart had changed.

"Thanks for *all* your kindness," concluded Ruth, with a faint touch of sarcasm.

Then Ruth and her mother departed, leaving George alone in his richness.

"I am so glad to get out of that stuffy place," Ruth remarked, taking a long breath of the keen October air.

The good, match-making Widow Martine sighed as she thought of the perversity of young women in general, and of her daughter in particular.

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Ruth's boarding-house was on a cross-street, not far from Madison Square. It had been recommended to her as a respectable and economical place in which to reside during her long stay in New York. It was of the regulation style, having a brown-stone front, a basement kitchen, and high stone steps, which led into a dark, long, shabby-looking hall-way. On the right, as one entered, was the commonplace parlor, of which thousands like it may be found in all large American cities. A faded tapestry carpet of large-flowered pattern covered the floor, and dingy curtains of woolly stuff and lace were draped in the two long windows. In the centre of the room was a marble-top table, flanked by two straight-backed chairs, and against the walls were placed two uncomfortable rep-covered sofas of the clam-shell design. The purely ornamental furnishings consisted of a painting of fruits and flowers and an engraving representing a country scene in winter. In one corner was a tall rubber-plant, with thick, waxy-looking leaves.

Ruth curled herself up on the end of one of the clam-shell sofas while she waited for luncheon.



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And the sombre old room seemed to take on a different aspect. The shutters were open wide, and a bright ray of sunshine gleamed across the floor, transforming the faded flowers on the old carpet and the leaves of the ancient rubber-plant into things of beauty. The "country scene in winter" seemed to show faint signs of returning spring, while the "fruits and flowers" became actually luscious.

And Ruth! How tranquilly the curved upper lip rested! Her clear-cut features never seemed more beautiful. She had turned from visions of indolent luxury in order that she might lead the life of independence which her nature claimed. Her heart yearned for action. The trouble and labor she had passed through—the pinching pangs of poverty, the long hours of study and practice—possessed a value of which she now felt assured. Nothing but the freedom of her present life could offer her happiness; and the thoughts that flashed through her mind after leaving George Piggott—memories that belonged to the buried past—were now repugnant to her. She would never revive them. She would avoid him in the future. The days

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of her childish follies and mistakes had vanished. She was now a self-supporting, self-respecting woman.

In the club-house, not ten blocks distant from Ruth's abode, Arthur Waring and his friend Doctor Fairlie were sitting comfortably on opposite sides of a well-furnished dining-table.

A bachelor at forty years of age has usually formed habits of life which subsequent changes in his circumstances seldom alter. In physique also—aside from the effects of ill-health—there is seldom any variation; and Waring, as he sat at luncheon with his old friend, was the same man, in appearance at least, as when he first mourned the loss of the sweet woman who escaped from his encircling arms at Graystone.

There was, however, less hair on the top of his intellectual head, and a greater number of gray ones in his moustache and eyebrows.

In his manner, also, there was more pronounced gentleness,—a courteous mien and deference in speech, which harmonized with the expression in his friendly blue eyes. The sorrow

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of his life had mellowed his kindly nature into a compassionate, sympathetic being, in whose mind his love had become idealized and in whose heart the image of Ruth Martine was enshrined.

"If you feel any reluctance in introducing me to the golden calf, I can present myself, and still feel obliged to you for your good intentions, old boy," Doctor Fairlie was saying.

"Why, Jack, that man Piggott's wealth makes no impression on *me*. His dollars might be Dutch bulbs for all I care," Waring replied, laughing.

"But, then, his former relationship to—er——"

"Jack!"

"Exactly so," said the startled doctor, quickly. "Bless my soul, Artie, the way you jump on a fellow for—for——"

"We were speaking about the influence of wealth," continued Waring, in a most pedantic manner. "Now, Felltham says: 'Gold is the coverlet of imperfections. It is the fool's curtain which hides all his defects from the world. It can make knees bow, and tongues speak, against the native genius of the heart. The

## Graystone

heathens made Jupiter their chief god ; and we have crowned Plutus. He is master of the Muses, and can buy their voices. The Graces wait on him ; Mercury is his messenger ; Mars comes to him for his pay ; Venus is his prostitute. He can make Vesta break her vow ; He can have Bacchus be merry with him, and Ceres feast him when he pleases. He is the sick man's Æsculapius, and the Pallas of an empty brain. Money is a general man ; and, without doubt, excellently endowed with capabilities.' ”

“ Exactly so, Artie,” again said Doctor Fairlie ; “ and that is the reason why I asked you whether you felt any reluctance in introducing me to this particular fool.”

“ Not in the least,” replied the lieutenant from the safer vantage-ground. “ I merely wished to emphasize the fact that I will bow my knee to George Piggott, not for his wealth, but for the purpose of endeavoring to obtain for you the remunerative position of chief surgeon in that charming *Hotel Dieu* at Acton.”

“ Exactly so,” said the complacent physician for the third time.

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## CHAPTER XIX

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*“ Now, now, Sir knight, shew what ye bee ;  
Add faith unto your force, and be not faint.”*

LATER in the afternoon of the same day, Arthur Waring drew his chair towards the fire in the sitting-room of his club. He experienced a weariness of spirit as his mind reverted to his past life. Of what good had he been in the world? What burdens had he made lighter? Whose cross had he assisted to bear?

*Cui bono?* he asked himself, in a spirit of penitence.

Now, there was George Piggott, a rich man, active in business, a toiler in the industrial hive, whose enterprises gave employment to hundreds of working-men; while he—idle fellow—spent his time travelling about the world, haunting old-book stores, visiting art-galleries, and studying human nature. If he were only in the same

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position as George Piggott, or as that indefatigable student and worker Doctor Fairlie, whose blessed occupation was the healing of the sick and the comforting of the afflicted.

His thoughts went back to Graystone. He now spent very little of his time there. Every tree and flowering plant on the old homestead reminded him of Ruth—only Ruth. It might have been different, he sadly mused.

In the morning he intended going with his friend Doctor Fairlie to the office of Brown & Co. It would be to him a pleasing duty, for he thought that in conversation with George Piggott he might by chance hear something of Ruth Martine.

In the meantime, however, he was compelled to pass that afternoon and evening in the monotonous, weary manner which of late had become almost unbearable.

"If there should be a war," he muttered, discontentedly, "I might have a chance to run against a bullet, and thus put an end to the whole miserable business."

In this despairing frame of mind he arose from his seat by the cheerful fire, and crossing

## Graystone

the room, sank dejectedly into a chair close to the front window.

He looked out upon the avenue, which was filled with people passing to and fro in restless motion. They seemed to be intent upon attending to their own particular affairs, and not one of them glanced in his direction.

"How many women there are," he thought, "who seem to pass their time gadding on the streets, and who might be—— God Almighty!" he exclaimed, excitedly; "there is——"

The heavy chair fell backwards as Waring sprang to his feet and rushed frantically towards the coat-room.

"My—my—hat! Quick!" he gasped.

A man in livery, trained by years of service into a fixed equation of movement, arose quietly from his chair behind the railing.

"Yes, sir," he said, deferentially, and displaying not the least appearance of surprise. "Your check, if you please, sir."

Waring fumbled in his pockets, thereby losing what was to him a precious moment of time.

"Any hat will do, Thomas," he implored.

The man smiled, faintly, respectfully.

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“Mr. Waring, I can’t do——”

But Waring did not wait for Thomas to finish. Reaching his long arm towards the row of head coverings,—all very much alike,—he selected the one most convenient, and said to the now thoroughly astonished man, “I’ll be back in an hour.”

In another second Waring was hurrying down Fifth Avenue at a gait which threatened harm to any unfortunate pedestrian who might cross his path.

Ruth Martine, now more robust and womanly, was walking demurely through Madison Square. Lieutenant Waring, who had recognized her from the window of his club, could easily have overtaken her in less than a minute, when suddenly—oh, foolish man!—his pace slackened to a leisurely walk, and he felt himself restrained by a cowardly timidity. Embarrassed and undecided, his heart throbbing violently and his knees trembling, he certainly did not resemble a happy lover who had just found a long-lost sweetheart.

His mind was confused by vague doubts and misgivings.



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How would she receive him? How should he greet her after four years absence? Why had she not written to him or sent him her address?

This last question he had repeatedly asked himself during their long separation; and now, when he could have been at her side in an instant, he hesitated, because he did not possess the courage to approach her. For a second he even thought of retracing his steps to the club; but his better nature prevailed, and urged him to follow wherever she might lead.

Waring had not gone far when Ruth turned a corner so quickly that he lost sight of her for a moment. The alarming contingency of missing her altogether so accelerated his movements that he came around the corner at a great speed.

He nearly ran into her!

Ruth's boarding-house was but two doors from the corner, and she was standing on the lower step of the high stone flight gazing at the twinkling lights of the early evening,—now glimmering from windows and street lamps.

Waring stopped, awkwardly, confusedly.

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An evident flush of happiness overspread her sweet face as she gave him her gloved hand with a friendly greeting. All his previous doubts and misgivings disappeared.

"This is a most unexpected pleasure," she said, with much of her old time frankness and cordiality. "According to a tea-cup prophecy, I was to 'kiss a fool or meet a stranger,' and, sure enough, along comes Sir Tardy—the *late* Mr. Waring." She bowed and broke into a little mocking laugh which four years of hard work had not taken from her. "You *are* quite a stranger," she added.

"Under the circumstances, I would rather be the fool," he replied, with longing sincerity.

She pretended not to hear him.

"If you will accept the hospitality of our boarding-house, you may come in to dinner," she went on.

"May I?" he asked, eagerly, as they ascended the steps and entered the house together.

It seemed to him remarkable how the diffident, retiring young girl of a few years ago had become so self-poised and reliant, as displayed in the simple act of using her own latch-key,

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her invitation to dinner, and the manner in which she ushered him into the shabby parlor.

The girl with an eager face and large, questioning eyes had in the intervening four years developed into womanhood.

"And what a beautiful woman she is," thought Waring, as he watched her.

The brisk walk had sent a ruddy color into Ruth's cheeks; her eyes were unusually bright. She removed her hat with an easy familiarity, her hair showing some signs of tangled disorder. It was almost dark in the room; the light from the street lamps, beaming through the windows, glowed faintly on the leaves of the tall rubber-plant.

Waring thanked the Lord for his good fortune.

To be with her, to see her moving about the dingy room, to hear her voice, to know that he could put out his hand and touch her,—it was rapturous. He closed his eyes in ecstasy. When he opened them, she was still there, having seated herself comfortably in one corner of the clam-shell sofa.

"I was wondering," she said, "how you knew my address."

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"I did not know it," he replied, foolishly.  
"I just happened to—to——"

"Meet me at the door-step," she suggested. And the tone of her voice changed a little as she added, laughing, "Otherwise we might not have met for four years more."

Waring grew serious. He was thinking of the lonely hours of the nights, of the anxious days when he sought her with so much zeal, and of her silence during the long, distracting years.

He bent forward in his chair and tried to look straight into her eyes; but they were cast downwards.

"Ruth—Miss Martine," he essayed, with emotion, "I have tried to find you every day since the time you left Graystone."

Ruth moved uneasily. She knew that the words he uttered must of necessity be true. There was no room for falsehood or deceit in Waring's nature.

"You might have saved yourself all that trouble," she answered, with a slight toss of her head, "had you inquired of your friend Doctor Fairlie."

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"My—my—friend Doctor Fairlie?" Waring arose from his chair and stood in front of her in an inquisitorial manner.

"Please don't become dramatic," she said, resentfully. "Sit down," she commanded.

Waring meekly obeyed.

"I know that three of the boarders, at least, are in the next room listening to every word we say," she explained; "and I hear the landlady coming to light the gas."

The dinner was a very mediocre affair. The dining-room was in the basement, and it was a narrow room, with a low ceiling, in the centre of which stood a long table. At the head sat the landlady, and at the other end the star-boarder,—a bachelor who had lived in the house for a quarter of a century. At irregular intervals along both sides of the table were seated young men and maidens, old men and women; it was an uncongenial lot of persons indiscriminately assembled by fortuitous circumstances. Naturally, the conversation was of that fragmentary and forced character which results when people are thrown together who have no interests in common, or in each other.

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Waring sat beside Ruth, totally oblivious of the commonplace surroundings. Whenever he attempted to speak of things personal, however, she checked him by a significant look.

For this reason he heard nothing at that time of what had transpired in her life since their separation. They talked of ordinary matters until the dinner was over. They remained at the table until all the others had left the room, and they were about to return to the parlor, when a servant handed Ruth a card. Waring noticed that she flushed considerably.

"A boarding-house is such an awkward, free-and-easy place," Ruth explained, in apparent embarrassment. "I hardly—know what to say—to you," she stammered.

"Don't consider me for a moment," whispered Waring, heroically, as they passed into the hall.

"The fact is," she said, laughing constrainedly, "a gentleman is waiting for me in the parlor, and—and—we must both pass the open door."

"Not necessarily together," he bravely suggested. "I can bid you good-evening here, and——" His face showed evidences of his disappointment. She could turn him aside so easily.

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"You could go first and close the door," he added, while his heart almost ceased beating.

He stood on the stairs a step or two above her, and looked down upon her upturned face, shining in the full light of a chandelier.

At times, without thought or preparation, we make mental photographs that become fixed in our minds forever. So Waring's most vivid recollection of Ruth Martine in after years was the impression made upon his mind at that instant.

"*Au revoir*," she said, lightly, and then went past him up the stairs.

A few moments afterwards Waring continued slowly up into the hall, and, opening the front door, stood shivering in the atmosphere of a frosty October night. At the curb stood a handsome brougham, with horses and driver carefully protected from the chilly air. The vehicle was so ostentatiously rich-looking, so out of keeping with the unfashionable street and boarding-house, that Waring involuntarily gazed from the carriage to the house which he had just left. He saw through the window the unmistakable profile of George Piggott.

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## CHAPTER XX

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*"There it ranckleth, more and more,  
Hey, ho, the arrowe!"*

**A**FTER leaving Ruth's boarding-house that evening, Arthur Waring walked at random for a long distance, hoping thereby to assimilate the events which had crowded into his life in so short a time that he could hardly realize whether they were actual occurrences or mere figments of his brain, and he finally returned to his club in a state of mental excitement and bodily fatigue.

He could now classify them in an orderly, methodical way,—

"Ruth was living alone in New York."

"She was no longer the curious, dreamy maiden of Graystone."

"She was on terms of friendly intimacy with George Piggott."

These were apparent truths which Waring



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kept repeating to himself in monotonous sequence until his mind grew weary.

Then he compared the present sound of Ruth's voice and the look in her wondrous eyes with the sound of her gay laughter and the searching glance of her eyes as he knew them in the days so far in the past, and hope revived within him.

He took from a small silk case a tiny note. It was the only one Ruth had ever written to him,—

*"I am not engaged to——"*

But *that* was written four years ago, and now——

Was not Piggott with her at this very moment?

He tried to solve the problem; but he could not put aside the array of facts which the last few hours had graven on his brain,—he could think of nothing else.

After walking around his room for a considerable time, he went out upon the avenue and into Madison Square; he returned to his room and smoked his pipe; he wrote several notes containing passionate avowals of his love

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and tore them up in embarrassed haste; he lingered before the dying coal fire until the gray ashes well nigh covered each glowing ember, and then he went out again.

He walked ten blocks in an incredibly short time, and again stood in front of Ruth's boarding-house. He experienced a brief cessation of his agitation when he found the house in darkness and the elegant brougham no longer standing at the curb.

"I have never actually proposed to her." This thought was very consoling. "I will do so to-morrow," he resolved.

His mind became clear, and he was conscious of his heart's strength.

"I will tell her of my miserable experience since she left Graystone; of my love for her; how much I have suffered for her sweet sake. And she will sympathize with me; she will learn to love me,—she will be my wife."

He looked up at the grim front of the shabby old boarding-house and felt a regard for every brick in its dilapidated walls, because they sheltered the exquisite form of his beloved, sleeping Ruth!

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His heart was so full of tenderness and his thoughts so intently centred on his absorbing reflections that he did not notice a rapidly approaching carriage, which drew up to the curb—with a pair of high-stepping, snorting horses—almost at his shoulder. He had barely time to recognize the showy coachman and to step into the shadow of a lamp-post, when the carriage-door swung open and George Piggott slowly emerged from the cushioned interior, followed by Ruth !

“I am accustomed to travelling,” she was saying, “and I will be ready when you call for me.”

“But your trunk and—er—other things,” said Piggott, as they went up the front steps.

“But I have no—er—other things,” she mockingly repeated, gaily. “I will express my trunk to Acton.”

“Good-night.”

The door of the boarding-house closed softly; the door of the luxurious carriage slammed with noisy recklessness.

Waring was once more alone.

His heart was now full of bitterness. He turned and walked slowly towards his club. A

## Graystone

feeling of weakness came over him. His legs seemed unbearably tired, and his back ached as though under the weight of a heavy burden. Pshaw! it was nothing. Why should he care? He would scorn her very memory. He would be a man. And thus he rallied his faltering spirit, and valiantly tottered on.

In the pale light of morning he thought differently. Why should he blame her if she enjoyed the society of her life-long friend? What right had he to question any action of hers? His resolution of the night before was the proper one; it was the only honorable way in which he could claim her consideration. He would go to her and ask her to be his wife. Then, indeed, he might claim to be a rival of George Piggott. Now he was nothing but a sentimental lover. He would call on her this very day and settle his fate.

At breakfast, in the full light of day, his resolution weakened.

"Why should you propose to Ruth Martine?" his inner consciousness asked, mockingly. "Why should you ask her to be your

## Graystone

wife? Dear me! there is no fool like an *old* fool!" And the buttered toast nearly choked Waring. "Don't you remember that she went away from you of her own free will? That she never sent you her address? Has it ever occurred to you that you are as nothing to her? That she does not care the snap of her shapely white fingers about you or your moth-eaten old Graystone? Nothing—at all!"

Waring took from his breast pocket the little silk case containing Ruth's note. "*I am not engaged!*" he read, as a plea for his side of the argument.

But his inexorable other self only jeered lustily.

"That is but a mere womanly scheme to have the last word. Remember—*that* was written four years ago. George Piggott is now a millionaire; one of the most successful business-men in New York; while *you* are simply a bald-headed old book-worm, living on mouldering by-gones in your shell at Graystone."

"But I have seen the world," he meekly protested.

"Exactly; and now you would like to settle

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down in that lonely suburb, with Ruth to smooth your rheumatic wrinkles. Ask her—to-day. Nothing else will cure your fine frenzy."

Waring gulped down a cup of hot coffee and strode into the sitting-room.

Doctor Fairlie had just come in, breezy and full of ambition.

"Whenever you are ready, Artie," he said, "we will bow down before the golden calf, and then I will secure transportation to the classic shades of Acton."

"Acton! Ah, yes, that was the place." But Waring was cunning. "*You might have saved yourself all that trouble had you inquired of your friend Doctor Fairlie,*" Ruth had said.

He remembered the shabby parlor and Ruth's imperious command of—last night.

Last night! Surely it was longer ago than last night. "So quickly our whims on our miseries stride."

"Well!" interjected the vigorous doctor.

"We will go, presently," replied Waring, gravely. "I want to ask you a few questions before we leave."

"With pleasure, my ancient and honorable

## Graystone

friend," said the doctor, jokingly, as he removed his overcoat. "How bald and gray you are getting, Artie. I declare——"

"For Heaven's sake, Jack, hold your garrulous tongue," interrupted Waring, ill-naturedly.

And the doctor became silent. He had no desire to mar a friendship which had covered a period of many years and included innumerable experiences.

"You remember Miss—Miss Martine?" Waring began, slowly.

"Perfectly," replied the doctor, sententiously.

"We—ah—I—that is—you have never seen her since—since that day, you know—in—in Philadelphia, when we discussed the letter she wrote you,—about being a trained nurse, and—other—things, have you?"

The truthful doctor flushed slightly under the direct gaze of Waring's blue eyes.

"Yes. I met her once since then," he replied.

"And you never told me," said Waring, reproachfully.

"You had a way of cutting me off whenever Miss Martine's name was mentioned,"

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apologized the ingenuous physician. "Besides, I thought it best——"

Waring waved his hand impatiently.

"When, where, and how did you meet her?" he demanded, with almost harsh directness.

"The same day; on Broad Street; in a crowd," snapped out the now agitated doctor, with slowly rising anger.

But Waring took no heed. "May I ask," he went on, with exasperating coldness, "whether Miss Martine gave you her address?"

"She did." The doctor was becoming furious.

"And you——"

"Tore up her card and threw it away," broke in Fairlie, defiantly. "I did it for your good."

Waring's eyes grew large and round. His face was suffused with emotion and desperate determination. He had a momentary desire to rush on his friend and strike him with his clenched fist. Then his gentle nature prevailed, and a vague idea of abandoning everything, of running away to the uttermost parts of the earth—a sense of overpowering weakness, of despair—followed.



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"I will try to forgive you, Fairlie," he gasped ;  
"but we must separate here—right here."

"As you wish," returned the ruffled doctor,  
bowing stiffly.

And so they separated.

In the evening Arthur Waring started for Ruth Martine's boarding-house, fully resolved to tell her everything. He had a few compunctious throbs when he thought how he would be obliged to tell her of Fairlie's discourteous treatment. But his painful sense of injury, and above all the duty which he owed to her and to himself, demanded a full and satisfactory explanation—and an avowal of his love—which would be couched in such persuasive earnestness that she would forgive him—and all would be well.

The front door was opened in response to his ring by a shrewd maid-of-all-work, who stood in the dingy vestibule barring his entrance. A grin of recognition crossed her face when she saw him and heard his inquiry.

"No, sor—Miss Martine is gone," she replied, holding the door half open.

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"To—to Acton?" he queried, with the assumed manner of one who was familiar with the situation, but who merely wished a confirmation of his knowledge.

"Yis, sor," confidentially.

"Did the—er!" He felt mean and contemptible. But he must know the truth and settle the matter now and forever. "Did—did the gentleman—er!" He could not go on before this sloven of a girl.

But her face lighted with interest as she continued, "Yis, sor; he come for her. Th' wan that was here last night."

"Last night?"

Merciful Heaven! was it still spoken of as only last night?

"Yis, sor; when you were here," she explained, cheerfully.

And then he said, "Good-night."

When Waring returned to Graystone the sweet, calm days of October had been succeeded by the dreary ones of November.

The fields were now of neutral tints, with a prevailing color of pale yellow and green.

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Here and there were broad stretches of tender green shoots of winter grain pushing their persistent growth through the cold soil—fore-runners of spring. And there were many piles of corn stalks stacked for winter's use.

The trees in the orchard were bare and gray—their naked branches standing out in meek protest against the unfriendly, gloomy sky. The golden-rod and the red sumac; the dainty, cream-white queen's-lace and the purple flowers, were now all of a quiet sober brown. The noisy creek was hushed by the icy hand of winter. There were no butterflies or droning bees. The only living things about the fields and meadows were a few experienced, tough old chickens; and a flock of tame pigeons might be seen perched on the eaves of the old stone barn.

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## CHAPTER XXI

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*"Wel-away, the while I was so fonde  
To leave the good, that I had in bande."*

FATHER FALLON was not a day over thirty. He was young-looking and solidly built; he had a slightly curved nose and a dimpled chin; and he inherited from his Irish mother the rare combination of blue eyes and black hair.

He was good-natured and benevolent. He wore a seedy, long black coat, a soft felt hat, and a high-cut vest, above which appeared a "Roman" collar, the one distinguishing mark of his priesthood, excepting a small black cross suspended from a guard placed around his neck.

Father Fallon was the only clergyman stationed in Acton; and the wooden chapel in which he held divine service was the only place of religious instruction within a radius of thirty miles.

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He was a father not only to those of his own faith, but also to the sorrowful, troubled souls of other faiths, or of no faith. It was immaterial to him: he went wherever his services were needed.

The good priest depended on the generosity of the hard-working members of his congregation to supply his necessities. Sometimes they contributed money, but more frequently it came in the form of labor performed in the little garden adjoining the church; also in splitting wood for his winter's store, and in making such repairs as were necessary. The few hundred dollars received each year by the unselfish priest were distributed among the poor and needy of the whole parish. The elasticity of his meagre stipend was astonishing. No one could tell exactly how his personal expenses were defrayed. His hearty laugh never diminished, and the faded black coat always looked the same. He slept in the two-story frame house adjoining the church—whenever he could find time to sleep. To fulfil the duties of spiritual guide of a whole village required many hours of labor in visiting the sick, in burying the

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dead, and occasionally—very occasionally—in marrying a couple brave enough to unite their misfortunes into a lifelong struggle for existence. It was necessary, also, for Father Fallon to act as peacemaker. The long arm of the law was weakened by distance and insufficient nourishment before it reached the criminal element in Acton. Its enervated sinews, as represented by a timid justice of the peace and a cowardly sheriff, only excited the derision of the lawless when they chose to be perniciously active. The two rival taverns were thorns in the side of the priest; but the proprietors of these objectionable places felt obliged to close up whenever he requested it.

Father Fallon was jovial and companionable. He was fond of a cigar, and sometimes—very rarely—he indulged in a glass of wine. He had a small library of choice old books, he had travelled extensively, and he was broad-minded and liberal. It was, therefore, natural that he should become friendly with the sad-faced, serious-minded Richard Black, and this friendliness ensued long before the latter reached the position of mine-boss.

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They discussed the operations of Brown & Co. and the great changes that were taking place around Acton,—how the forests were being converted into clearings; how expensive collieries were being erected; how railroads were being built with a recklessness as to cost which paled into insignificance the modest operations of the old Acton Coal Company. Everything undertaken by Brown & Co. was pushed forward at high-pressure speed. The framework of their new tipples was of rolled steel, designed to work with automatic dumps and self-acting lifts. Solid stone houses, containing engines and dynamos, appeared in the clearings as if by magic. Stories were passed from one to another of wonderful inventions, called mining-machines, by the use of which one man could do the work of a dozen skilled miners, and of electric motors that would take the place of fifty good mules! One enthusiastic individual asserted at the "Metropolitan" tavern that the mines of Brown & Co. would be lighted by electricity, and that the entries would be lined and arched with solid masonry.

Black and Father Fallon had at various times

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also considered a serious condition of affairs, which appeared to be the natural sequence of so much excitement and lavish expenditure. This was the growing discontent of the miners and the probability of a strike among the employees of the old company.

And so it happened that when Richard Black received the letter from Brown & Co. offering him the position of superintendent, he sought the advice of the only man in Acton whose opinion he valued.

He stood nervously anxious and pretended to be interested in a book while Father Fallon slowly read the letter.

"Well? What would you do?" Richard asked, expectantly.

"What would *I* do?" questioned the priest.

He was revolving in his mind the extravagant expenditures of Brown & Co.; the possibility of coming disaster; the lamentable results of wild, improvident speculation; the future of the honest man who stood before him.

"If you were in my position?" explained Richard.

"Well, in that case," said Father Fallon,



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—he appeared to be in a reminiscent mood, looking through the open window, across the valley and to the summit of the bordering mountains,—“well, in that case, and possessing some knowledge of the principal members of the firm of Brown & Co., I would not accept the position.”

Richard's disappointment was apparent on his face. Like many others who ask for advice, he expected it to be in accord with his wishes.

“You have never before mentioned the fact that you were acquainted with the firm. What have they done? What is wrong with them?” he demanded.

The priest laughed, good-naturedly, and raised his open hand in a manner habitual with him. “Bless you, Black, take it if you wish; but, for goodness sake, don't scowl at me so. A number of years have passed since I first met Mr. Brown, and he may have changed for the better; but I must admit that I was not favorably impressed with his character at that time.”

“First impressions are often misleading,”

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said Richard, handing a cigar to Father Fallon and lighting one himself. "Such an opportunity may not come to me again. They seem to have plenty of money,—and money is what I am after."

The priest started slightly and looked curiously at Richard. "You made that remark strangely like a similar one made in my presence to Mr. Brown by his partner. Almost in the same tone of voice, as I remember it."

"Oh, that's not unusual. I've been frequently told that I look and talk like other persons. You have forgotten——"

"No; the two men made a very disagreeable impression on me when I first met them on board a steamer crossing the Atlantic, and I have had doubts about them ever since."

"As if *you* could think ill of any one," said Richard, kindly.

"I try not to," returned the priest, thoughtfully; "but Brown certainly had the lines of a knave in his face. The other man, Piggott, was——"

"Piggott?"

The smoke from Richard's cigar almost

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choked him, and he stared at Father Fallon in open-eyed astonishment.

"Piggott, yes ; he is the partner of Brown," continued the priest, indifferently.

Richard's amazement increased. The cigar fell from his fingers, and, stooping very slowly, he deliberately picked it up and placed it carefully on a tray used for ashes. When he sat down again he had recovered somewhat his composure.

"Piggott is the man who sent you that letter," said Father Fallon. "His initials are in the corner,—'Dictated by G. P.'"

He handed the letter to Richard.

"Piggott was not so much a knave as he was a fool," resumed the priest. "He was evidently low bred, and pretended to be an aristocrat. Any one could read his pedigree. And now he is one of the great men. Pooh ! *Asperius nihil est humili, cum surgit in altum*,—which, in English, means, 'Nothing is more disagreeable than a man of mean origin raised into power.'"

Richard walked towards the window, and looked thoughtfully out upon the surround-

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ings; then, turning in the direction of Father Fallon, he said,—

“You say you met my—er—Mr. Piggott on board a steamer coming to this country?” He thought there could be no mistake, and yet it seemed so wildly improbable. He could now discuss the matter with calmness. “He may not have been the same man,” he suggested.

“Oh, but I am sure the Piggott whom I met on board the ‘Pennsylvania’ is the same——” He stopped abruptly, and, crossing the room, searched for several minutes in the drawer of an old bureau. “Here it is.” He held in his hand a large printed document. “There,” and he pointed to the line “George Piggott, Esq., capitalist, of Ashbourne, England.” It was the prospectus of Brown & Co.

Richard Black was convinced.

He took his hat from the chair on which it had been thrown, placed it on his head, and walked out of the house, saying not another word.

Father Fallon followed him down the rough, dirty road, picking his way around the holes

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and great hemlock stumps. He was familiar with the moods of the meditative mine-boss, and allowed him to walk for some distance in silence. At the corner of the main street he made known his presence. "Which way are you going?" he inquired.

"Down the Mill Road," Richard answered, apathetically. "I—want—I want to—see a man."

The priest looked uneasily at his downcast face, which the gray dusk of evening seemed to make more careworn and sad. "Down the Mill Road," he repeated, with anxious solicitude. "It is getting dark, and there are a great many scamps among the last batch of foreigners that came to the new works. They might attack you."

"Attack me?" Richard seemed amazed.

"They are a drunken crowd, generally, in the evenings," the priest cautioned. "Don't you think it would be well for me to go with you?"

The mine-boss looked in the direction of the now darkening road leading into the forest. "Oh, I am not afraid of the poor fellows——"

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"Some are mere tramps," urged the priest.

"I used to think there was no good in a tramp," said Richard, soberly; "but I found reasons for changing my mind. I have no fear of them."

"I am afraid you are angry with me because of my advice to you about—about that other situation. Perhaps it would be better for you to take—to accept it. Piggott may——"

"I am honestly obliged to you for your advice," answered Richard, earnestly. "I have no idea, now, of accepting the offer."

With a parting nod and a smile Richard Black started down the Mill Road at a swinging gait, as if anxious to be alone. In his inner consciousness he experienced a feeling of pride in the knowledge that George had become rich and powerful. He was angered at the thought that he had been left to struggle alone; and he was annoyed that his friend the priest had so easily read his brother's character.

Father Fallon, standing on the corner of the deserted streets, watched with kindly eyes the receding figure. He recalled the conversation

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of the evening as Richard vanished in the twilight.

“There is something about that man Black I don’t quite understand,” he said to himself. “There are times—this evening for instance—when he appears to be more than an ordinary miner.” The priest was straining his eyes in the direction of the Mill Road. “He evidently wishes to walk alone. But some persons often wish for things that are not for their good.”

So saying, Father Fallon grasped his stout cane more firmly and followed the mine-boss into the gathering darkness.

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## CHAPTER XXII

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*"But who will seeke for unknowne gayne,  
Oft lives by losse, and leaves with payne."*

WHEN Ruth Martine and her mother called upon George Piggott in his luxurious apartments they did not realize how deep an impression their visit made upon his susceptible nature. To Ruth the occasion had been simply a disagreeable duty forced upon her by stress of circumstances.

The hospital at Acton was a charitable institution, the outcome of a humane idea which originated in the compassionate mind of a good Samaritan, who impoverished himself and his family in endeavoring to build it, and who died before the work to which he had devoted his life was accomplished. It was situated on the outskirts of the town, and, owing to the lack of sufficient funds to complete the project, it had in its unfinished



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condition remained for years a monument of misdirected zeal. The weather-stained joists of the first story and the newer appearance of the timbers in the second and third stories gave mute and pathetic testimony of the several stages of construction, showing the beginning and ending of the periods in which the promoters raised money to carry on the work. When the wave of prosperity occasioned by the launching of Brown & Co.'s operations reached the town of Acton, the stranded institution again felt the thrill of life, and a substantial donation from the new company had started it into active usefulness.

Various newspapers in the surrounding towns had published items from their special correspondents giving laudatory accounts of the philanthropic action of Brown & Co., which were afterwards paid for at full advertising rates on presentation of the bills at their office in New York. By this means certain pricking consciences were quieted, and a confiding public was induced to seek consolation in the hope that the world was growing better. In this way, also, Ruth Martine and Doctor Fairlie

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were prompted to apply to Mr. George Piggott, one of the much-advertised philanthropists, to aid them in securing the positions respectively of matron and chief surgeon in the hospital.

To the Widow Martine, however, the visit to George's apartments promised more sentiment than business. She had never entirely lost hope in an idea, fostered in their childhood, that the marriage of Ruth and George would consummate a union of tastes and interests in every way desirable.

To George Piggott the sight of Ruth, after so long an absence, revived and fanned into flame a spark of passion which had heretofore only flickered. All through the day the memory of a searching pair of black eyes, the sound of her voice, the shape of her dainty foot, the poise of her graceful head, and the gleam of the white teeth beneath her curved upper lip haunted him,—while he was in his office, while he was seated at luncheon, and when he dined in the evening. He imagined he was hopelessly in love, and he tried his best to reason himself out of it.

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He argued with himself on the supreme folly of marrying a penniless girl of obscure parentage when with his millions it would be just as easy for him to marry a girl of lineage, and perhaps of wealth also. He upbraided himself for his foolish susceptibility, and then—without even waiting to finish his dinner—he hurried to his rooms, and, after dressing himself in his most fashionable and attractive garments, ordered his carriage to be ready at once.

A few moments afterwards he was on his way to Ruth's boarding-house, arriving there as she and Lieutenant Waring were about to leave the dining-room. While waiting for her in the faded-looking parlor he again became absorbed in the contemplation of his headlong foolishness. The obtrusive shabbiness of his surroundings gave him a sudden mental shock. Then his thoughts began to wander again in a dreamy reverie, in which his fancy painted a high-born lady attired in silks and fabrics of almost fabulous price. He had blissful visions of a being with alluring form and dignified carriage, in an ancestral home, attended by

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liveried servants,—a magnificent house, situated in a domain of aristocratic seclusion and——

Ruth stood before him in a plain dark suit, and the figure of his vision immediately faded away.

She was erect, gracious, and yet apparently unapproachable. The thought came into his mind that this obscure young person, this daughter of an humble Irish woman, regarded him as though he were far beneath her. When with a free and easy assurance he advanced to greet her, she acted in a manner simple and natural, while he felt uncomfortably constrained and awkward; and, quite ill at ease, he sat down again after a formal hand-shake. He tried to think of something to say to her that would serve as an excuse for the sudden return of her visit; and as he felt the spell of a pair of dark eyes calmly analyzing his innermost thoughts, he became almost silly and nervously apprehensive lest she should detect the flimsy structure he had erected in his mind, which he had mistaken for love. This bright, sweet-faced girl of his youthful days had suddenly come to him again as a matured and beautiful

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woman, and he desired to enjoy the sensation of monopolizing her heart and affections. There was to him a keen satisfaction in the impetuous, conquering-hero style in which he had driven up to Ruth's dingy boarding-house, flushed with the thought of an easy victory. But, without knowing exactly how she accomplished it, his old sweetheart seemed to command him by every word or gesture which she made. She put him in the irritating position of listening to what she had to say, instead of, as he expected, meekly accepting his leadership and surrendering at once to the effusive declarations he had intended to make, and which now appeared to him trite and commonplace even before they were spoken.

"It was the most unexpected thing," he said, "when my man brought me your card this morning." He emphasized "my man," and looked for results.

"Your man? Oh, yes. What a stupid person he is. My French made no impression on him. A *paysan*, I imagine, of the lower——"

"Then, you speak French?"

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Yes. "I was born in Belgium, you know; and my father taught me to speak French before I knew anything of the English language. It was a fancy of his. You appear to have forgotten 'little Sweetbrier,' with her foreign jargon. You are so old and—rich—you have forgotten all—about me."

The blundering Piggott did not see the mischievous gleam in her pathetic eyes.

"It's just the other way," he answered, with a reassuring laugh. "You seem to have forgotten me—to have forgotten that once we were——"

"Neighbors," she added. "We had not seen each other for so long a time, that I was not quite sure whether you would endorse my application for the position; but my mother thought we might venture to call on you, and so we surprised you. It was her idea."

"I have never seen so beautiful a woman," he thought, as he looked in her great dark eyes. But her mother. He had forgotten the mother. Still, he felt sure he could arrange the matter in some way,—an old woman's home or something.

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"How is your mother? Is she boarding in this house also?" he inquired, suddenly.

And he looked sincerely interested.

"No," she replied. "My mother has a position as housekeeper here in New York; but I am living alone."

This was the opportunity he was looking for. He crossed the room and took a seat close to her on the other end of the clam-shell sofa.

"You don't have to continue living alone," he said, in a voice that was meant to be tender.

He wished to put an end to all this coldness and reserve, which made him feel as if he were a mere stranger. After all, she ought to be thankful—yes, grateful—to him for the chance of——

"I called this evening," he went on, by way of explanation, "to——"

"Arrange matters for me," she hastily interrupted. "That was very good of you. We might talk it over with mother, if—if you would go with me," she suggested, sweetly.

He was not quite sure that he understood her correctly.

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"You mean to see your mother about—about——"

"My departure for Acton," she said, calmly.

"Acton!" he exclaimed. Then his anger arose.

"Yes. I was going to see my mother this evening, to say good-by," she went on, innocently; "and you may go with me, if you wish."

*May* go with her, a poverty-stricken nobody, to talk it over with her mother, a hired housekeeper. This affront to his pride filled him with indignation. He wondered if she was really in earnest. She had certainly surmised by this time the real reason for his being there. He was silent and churlish.

"I shall be sorry to leave this old house," she mused, reflectively.

Piggott looked around at the forlorn appearance of the room. Bah! the jewelled match-box in his pocket was worth more than all the furniture in it.

"You are easily pleased," he said, loftily.

And then, to show her that he could be dignified on occasions, he reached for his hat



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and made a tentative movement towards the door.

To his surprise, she arose immediately and followed him.

"I will be down in a moment," she said, quickly; "and you may go with me."

The next night George Piggott paced around his luxurious apartments in an indignant manner. Ruth's evident determination to reject his lover-like advances wounded his pride. He became furious when he recalled her treatment of him. The thought of her airy, careless, laughing conduct so filled his mind that his money and worldly goods had no place in it. He was angry with everything.

"You little fool," he said, in a rage,—which showed the depth of his humiliation and the keenness of his disappointment,—“you may go to Acton, or to—any other place, for all I care.”

And the weak, insignificant passion which he mistook for love, though born only the day before, shuddered and died.

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## CHAPTER XXIII

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*"When shepherds had none inheritance  
Ne of land, nor fee in sufferance."*

**A** HEART-STRING is said to break with every parting. Time, the kindly healer, makes great efforts to repair the sundered cords; but though the texture may still appear strong, a mass of knots and twisted woof can be felt along its tender surface.

Ruth Martine had succeeded in securing the position as matron of the hospital in Acton.

Her duties there would necessitate a separation from her mother, and place her in a rough, strange country, full of hardships and dangers, which to her vivid imagination appeared more disagreeable than they would be in reality.

The short and unexpected visit of Arthur Waring had awakened in her heart lively feelings of emotion, which at times she found difficult to suppress. Her long and arduous

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training had enabled her to attain results equaling her expectations and ambitions. Her dream of independence, coupled with a natural desire to do good to others less fortunate than herself, had been realized,—for she was now free and fully equipped to go forth into the world, to take her place on the firing-line, to fight for a living.

But the unanticipated appearance of Waring also revived sweet memories of that peaceful life at Graystone, and seemed to weaken her resolution of endeavor and strenuous action.

“Why should I sacrifice the renewal of those happy days for the sake of duty?” she one evening implored of her other self, after retiring to her bed in the old boarding-house. And visions of a bright morning in August came to her, with the blue sky and the fragrance of the open fields; the shady lane, winding down beneath the towering chestnut-trees to the cool spring-house; the foot-path to the old-style garden, full of hollyhocks and bachelor-buttons, of cowslips and sweet violets, of boxwood borders and fluttering humming-birds; of the old-fashioned sun-dial mounted on its solid pedestal

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in the midst of the garden, and surrounded by a tangled mass of sweetbrier.

She remembered the inscription cut in rough letters on the weather-stained stone,—

### **Tempus Omnia Revelat**

And then Waring stood beside her, bending curiously over the dial.

“What a lesson for all who care to learn it!” he said, quietly. “It marks only the bright and sunny hours of life, while the cloudy and stormy days and the dark hours of night cast no shadow upon its face as they pass away unrecorded.”

“Would you be a pensioner on his good-natured bounty?” asked her other self.

She started, sat up in the bed with a bound, and stared around the bare little room.

“Never! I will never be that,” she said to herself.

She stepped out of the bed and put on a pair of slippers. Then she wrapped herself in a soft, warm robe, opened the door of the adjoining room, and listened. From the darkness came the sound of healthy, regular

## Graystone

breathing. The Widow Martine was a deep sleeper.

She came to the boarding-house that day for the purpose of assisting Ruth to pack her things, and incidentally to make a few remarks regarding the foolishness which prevailed among young women of the present generation, who would rather earn their own bread in the wilds of Pennsylvania than marry and settle down in the home of a New York millionaire. And the remarks lead to conversation, and from that to argument and expostulation,—even entreaty,—until at last the night was far advanced, and, the adjoining room being vacant, she had retired, wearied by the discussion, and was now finding rest in Nature's sweet restorer, tranquil sleep.

"Poor mother!—poor old mother!—if she could only understand!"

The light from the gas-jet in Ruth's room was shining on the face of the sleeper. Ruth crept softly into the bed beside her mother and put her lips close to the rosy cheek.

"Mother."

In the whole world she was her only refuge,

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her only companion ; and on the morrow they were to be parted.

The Widow Martine rose up in the bed, dazed by the light and the touch of her daughter's warm lips.

Ruth's face was wet with tears.

"I was *so* lonely ; and I think I must have been dreaming. I don't want to go away to that—that horrid Acton." And she sobbed aloud.

"Ruth, *mavourneen*," said the mother, putting her arms around her. "*Musha*, sure and—and there's no *raison*, for all the world——" And she began patting Ruth's face and crooning, "*Acushla, machree* ; an' you dramed you were going to lave me, *avourneen*, forever. And me to see your sweet face no more !" Then she began to cry softly. "Oh, it's you that is the good daughter. Ruth, *avourneen deelish*, I meant no harrum or harshness to you, *avourneen* ; and you'll forgive your poor mother ? There, now. Sh !—Sh !—Cry no more."

And, as in the old days, long, long ago, Ruth sighed faintly and fell fast asleep in her mother's arms.

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In the morning there was plenty to do ; but the Widow Martine took time to examine some old papers which she had brought with her, and which formerly belonged to her husband. She found among them a batch of carefully-folded legal documents, which she handed to Ruth, with a smile.

“Whin you spoke of Acton, darlin’, I remimbered wanst your father told me there was a place of the same name in some land he bought, and he sed to take good care of thim papers. ‘They’ll make your independent fortune some day,’ said he. But thin your father was always makin’ fortunes,—but niver a wan he finished.” She sighed deeply. “Ah ! indade you nadent be settin’ any store by it, or spendin’ the same.”

She had noticed her daughter’s eager surprise and the interest which she manifested in the old papers, and she remembered the disappointing schemes of her husband, the dreaming artist, Martine.

“But, mother,” said Ruth, hopefully, “they may be of some value. And *now* I want to go to Acton at once.”

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Her black eyes were fairly dancing with delight. Here was a chance. Here was something out of the ordinary. There appeared to be a bare possibility of securing a fortune through the agency of those old papers!

Ah, Ruth; dear little Ruth! How animated she became at the mere thought of acquiring wealth. She who had refused the millions offered her along with the hand of George Piggott!

When Ruth arrived at Acton she found that there was not yet very much for her to do in connection with the Miners' Hospital, for that institution was still in its chronic condition of incompleteness and some time must elapse before the wards would be ready to receive the occasional victims of the mines.

But there were other matters to which she desired to devote her attention, and she set about them in her characteristic fashion. She secured a room with Mrs. Shaw, a large, strong, good-natured woman, who took the undisputed lead in all the social affairs of Acton. Mr. Shaw was a small, inoffensive-looking man,



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with kindly brown eyes that smiled cautiously from beneath a protruding forehead. He assisted his wife in earning a precarious living by filling the positions of schoolmaster, surveyor, and justice of the peace. By their neighbors he was usually spoken of as "Mrs. Shaw's husband ;" and a rumor had gained wide circulation, and was generally believed, that when he signed his official name, with J. P. attached, he did so only after he had received Mrs. Shaw's permission. That might have been the truth ; but in fairness to both man and wife it is proper to state that Mrs. Shaw's decisions on points of law, as rendered through the instrumentality of her husband, or, as it might have been, the decisions of John Shaw, J. P., as given by himself, were seldom reversed by the higher courts to whom they were submitted.

This fact was particularly noticeable in all questions pertaining to the boundary-lines of lands in the neighborhood of Acton. As a surveyor, Shaw knew every corner, every blazed boundary-tree or stump, every bench-mark in the county that was of any consequence.

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He had a supreme contempt for the methods of the modern civil engineer, who read the angles of survey from graduated vernier plates and who made abstruse allowances for magnetic variations in tracing out old land-lines.

Compass readings were good enough for him ; and on each line of his plat, as he called it, John Shaw marked the course in degrees and halves of a degree, and the distance in rods and perches.

It was, therefore, something of a personal slight to Shaw, the land surveyor, when Brown & Co. employed a smart young civil engineer from New York to make the surveys describing their vast tracts of land ; and it was a matter of great gratification to John Shaw, J. P., when Ruth Martine handed to him the old yellow documents which her mother had entrusted to her, and which he at once recognized as land-warrants. He assured her that she had brought the papers to the one person, above all others, who could tell her everything about them.

In addition to the distinguishing title of "Mrs. Shaw's husband," John Shaw was also known as "The Squire," ever since he built for

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himself the square, one-roomed, wooden affair in his side-yard which he called his office.

Here he worked out his surveys and dispensed justice at such times as he could obtain from his more regular duties of teaching school.

One wintry afternoon, during the week before Christmas, Ruth called upon Squire Shaw in relation to her papers. She sat in his little office deeply interested while he explained to her at length his opinion regarding their probable value.

"You see, it's just this way," he said, as he straightened himself up from bending over a large map on the drafting-table. "It appears that your father purchased this batch of land-warrants issued by the commonwealth of Pennsylvania in 1791 to—to—let me see." The squire deliberately placed an enormous pair of spectacles on his nose. They completely filled the space beneath his overhanging brows and his high cheek-bones with a substantial glass front, behind which his timid brown eyes appeared bold and courageous. "To certain parties named Morris and Gratz. I don't suppose your father ever located them?"

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And he looked at Ruth inquiringly through his great round glasses.

She shook her head sadly.

"My father was not much of a businessman, and my mother always thought the papers were of no value," she replied.

"Hm! Exactly. But when you came across *this* one,"—the squire separated a yellow document from the others,—"*issued to William Acton, the name struck you as—as——*"

"A coincidence, at least," answered Ruth.

"Hm! Just so," mused the squire, while he gazed in an absent-minded manner through the grimy panes of his office window.

His tone of voice was not encouraging.

"Then, you don't think the papers are of any value?" Ruth questioned, scarcely able to conceal her disappointment.

"That depends upon the amount of coal which the lands described in the papers contain," he answered, approvingly. "All the titles acquired by Brown & Co., and, in fact, by nearly every one in Acton and its vicinity, are based upon junior warrants issued by the commonwealth in 1793 and surveys which

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include in their descriptions the same lands already granted in the older warrants of 1791."

Ruth noticed a kindly smile on the squire's face and took courage.

"Then, you *do* think the——"

The squire assumed his most judicial manner. He now spoke as became John Shaw, J. P.

"My dear Miss Martine, I don't *think*—I *know*—that the titles of the junior warrants are absolutely valueless, and that your title covered by the Morris, Gratz, and Acton surveys is perfect to about forty thousand acres of good coal lands in this neighborhood."

Ruth gazed at the squire in astonishment.

"In fact," he added, "your title is good to nearly all the land around Acton, excepting, perhaps, the homes and the small farms of a few poor settlers who purchased parts of the junior warrants, who made clearings in enclosed fields, and who maintained their homes for twenty-one years."

"Those poor people are safe, at any rate," Ruth suggested, when she had recovered from her astonishment. The size of her good fortune developed as her anxiety for the fate

## Graystone

of the little homesteads in the wilderness was allayed.

The squire removed his big round spectacles, and again his kindly brown eyes smiled timidly, unguarded by the glass fronts.

"In *your* hands they would be entirely safe," he asserted; "but, unfortunately, they have all sold their farms to Brown & Co., of New York."

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## CHAPTER XXIV

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*"Passen their time that should be sparely spent  
In lustibede and wanton meryment."*

**A**FTER separating from Father Fallon, Richard Black walked slowly down the deserted Mill Road in deep meditation. During his conversation with the priest he had almost disclosed his incognito. His mind was filled with gloomy thoughts on the injustice of Fate and his heart with bitter repining at his continued ill-luck.

He had been made happy a few days before by the receipt of a letter containing a substantial offer of promotion, which he had been tempted to accept; now the thought that his brother, George Piggott, had dictated the letter and made the offer angered him. He remembered the last letter he received from the same person many years before. "He would never have written to Richard Black had he known that

## Graystone

in so doing he was writing to Richard Piggott," he said to himself, mournfully.

He recalled the circumstances surrounding their separation, and he was incensed when he thought that his brother had neglected him for seven years. He was a miner, a common workingman. Not that he considered himself above his occupation, for he loved the work in which he had gained such proficiency; but he was galled by the knowledge he had just obtained from Father Fallon, that the head of the great firm of Brown & Co., the source of all the ostentatious display of wealth and power which had burst upon the town of Acton like a golden sunrise, was his brother George!

He felt as if the results of his years of patient labor and endeavor, of his days of toil and his nights of study, were consumed by the glare and power of this brilliant light of a burning noonday sun, which seemed to have strength enough to wither his tender blossoms of hope and to dry up his aspirations at the very roots.

Richard continued walking slowly down the forest road, along the edge of a shallow creek.



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Two men suddenly emerged from the underbrush on one side and stood sullenly before him. There was yet light enough for him to see that one of the fellows had a stout club in his hand, while the other was armed with a revolver.

Owing to his irritated frame of mind, Richard found positive relief in springing at the fellow nearest him, grasping him by the throat, and bearing him to the ground, where they rolled over and struggled together. In an instant Richard was on his feet, and, wresting the club from the man's hands, threw it into the creek. In another instant he had picked up the sallow-faced Italian and, with a wrestling trick which he learned at Miller's School, had tossed him over his shoulder after the club.

Then he faced the other man, who held in his hand a cocked revolver.

"What's the trouble?" he asked.

"You can't go down to the old Mill tonight," said the man, doggedly.

"Get out of my way, or I'll——"

"You can't do *me* like you done him," the

## Graystone

fellow growled. "He's only a Dago," he added, contemptuously.

Richard rushed impetuously towards the man. There was a flash and a sharp report, and the revolver went whirling into the air, caused by the momentum given to it by a blow from his powerful arm. The two men closed in a fierce encounter. The angry Italian had by this time crawled up the steep bank of the creek, and was running to his companion's assistance. As he ran he unsheathed a long, dangerous-looking knife. Another moment, and he would have plunged it into the back of the unsuspecting Richard, when a heavy cane descended with a stinging blow on the Italian's arm, which made the infuriated man drop the knife and howl with pain.

Father Fallon could do good work with that cane. As an argument for "bating the divil," its force was known all over the parish.

The robust priest applied it mercilessly to the other fellow every time his body came uppermost in the scuffle.

"Take *that*, Barney O'Farrell! And *that*! And *that*! Hold him there, Richard."

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The Italian had vanished into the gathering darkness, and Barney O'Farrell surrendered unconditionally.

Father Fallon rested his tired arm and addressed the man.

"Is it murder you want to add to your other sins?" he demanded, with severity.

"He began the fight," said the man, crossly. "We wusn't a-doin' nothin' but holdin' a matin' down at the Mill, 'nd he up and jumped into us cos we wuz pickets 'nd wouldn't let him past."

"You take too much on yourself to hold up peaceable citizens on the public road," said the priest, tartly. "Now, go to your meeting," he added, "and tell them that Father Fallon says it would be better for them to be in their beds than wasting their time and money in idle talk and drinking. I know what your meetings are. Go!"

The fellow slunk away into the forest.

"Are you hurt at all?" the priest asked Richard.

"Not a haight," answered the mine-boss, carelessly. "I wouldn't mind a dozen of such drunken loafers."

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The priest recalled the uplifted hand clasping the murderous knife and shivered.

"They are a bad lot, those imported foreigners of Brown & Co. That man Barney O'Farrell is a dangerous chap, and I would advise you to keep out of his way," said Father Fallon, with much earnestness, as they walked along.

Apart from the disagreeable consequences likely to follow the adventure which Richard had experienced, there was another affair which threatened to be much more serious.

For months past some of the better paid men who worked for Brown & Co. had been effecting a secret organization, and these unruly spirits had so leavened the whole working community that an atmosphere of discontent and a tendency towards idleness was fast spreading over the entire region. All kinds of occasions were taken advantage of to quit work, even for a picnic or a general meeting. Upon every saints' day on the calendar these men would spend their time in feasting and drinking until their money and credit were exhausted. Then they would return to work and continue until they had again accumulated a

## Graystone

few dollars from their pay, when the idle spell would be repeated.

It was the thought of this serious condition of affairs that made Richard uneasy when Father Fallon spoke of Barney O'Farrell as being the man who had stopped him, and with whom he had fought on the Mill Road.

"That man O'Farrell is a turbulent fellow," said the priest, "and he is the head and front of all the mischief that is brewing."

"I never thought he had any influence with the men. Do you think they are organizing for a strike?" asked Richard.

"No doubt of it," asserted Father Fallon, confidently. "It may start in a small way; but strikes seem to be as catching as the measles. And you will have to look after your men also."

Richard thought of his miners,—he knew them all by name,—and smiled at the suggestion. But he was aware of the fact that the priest had reliable sources of information, and that if he gave any intimation of trouble it was worthy of consideration.

## Graystone

"When do you think they will go out?" he inquired.

"Oh, that is uncertain. In a month, perhaps; or possibly longer. But you must keep your eyes on that man O'Farrell. He was never a friend of yours; and after the chastisement which we gave him and his hilarious partner this evening I imagine he will regard you with even less favor than before."

"I'll keep a lookout for him, never fear," said Richard, as he again parted from the priest at the main street corner.

Six months afterwards Richard awoke one morning to find a note on the floor of his front room. It had been thrust under the door some time during the previous night. It was written, in a scrawling, almost illegible hand, on the back of a very much soiled scale report, and ran as follows:

### "NOTIS

"The Strikes is on today and you are hearbey notificated tu kape yur mouth shet under pinilty uv the law.

"Bi order uv they

"Comittee."

## Graystone

There was an unmistakable Irish flavor about the document which enabled the mine-boss to at once determine from whom it came. "That's from Barney O'Farrell," he said, laughing contemptuously.

After breakfast he walked down the steep hill from his house into the town. In front of the stores and the taverns he saw groups of men, who stood under the shelter of the porches, seeking protection from a cold, drizzling rain. They were listless, and apparently uncertain as to the exact reason for their idleness. The morning train from Philadelphia had not yet arrived; and it was rumored that there was a strike among the railroad men, and that there would be no train or daily papers for some time to come. The station agent had not yet finished his breakfast, and his delay in opening his office caused another rumor to circulate among the men that the telegraph operators, express agents, and postmasters, as represented by this one individual, had also gone on a strike, and that as a consequence Acton was cut off from all communication with the outside world.

## Graystone

Richard hastened to the mines.

He found the stable-boss in the scale-house, smoking his short clay pipe and making a nervous effort to appear at ease.

"Another holiday, Sandy?" began Richard.

"Aye."

"Very well," said Richard, quietly, and as if it were not an unusual occurrence. "It will do the stock good to rest awhile. If you don't care to feed them, I will attend to it. And, Sandy——"

"Aye."

"Lock up the shops and the pump-house, and bring the keys to my office."

Sandy Thomson had been delegated by the committee to watch the mine-boss. He reported, at a meeting held one hour later, that the miners of the Acton Coal Company were on strike, "and everything shut down tighter than a band-brake."

Not a wheel was turning.

Richard saw that it was too late for argument or persuasion, and he resolved to do everything possible to protect the property of the company. With that purpose in view he



## Graystone

went to the office of John Shaw, justice of the peace. That mild-mannered official looked up as Richard entered, and smiled in an embarrassed way. He was sitting on a splint-bottomed chair, warming his hands in front of a large cylinder stove, and was in a condition of nervous trepidation, but assumed a brave and dignified air by putting on his large round spectacles.

“Good-morning, squire.”

“Good-morning, Mr. Black.” There was a slight tremor in the man’s voice.

“I called to ask your opinion about the strike. There may be trouble, you know, and I suppose you could issue a warrant——”

The squire rose hastily to his feet.

“Now, Mr. Black—really—you know this is—so—so—unexpected—I hardly—all citizens, you see, and neighbors of ours.”

“There are a good many bad neighbors in the lot; enough to give us trouble,” said Richard, putting on his hat and opening the door.

At the railroad station Richard found the agent sitting with his chair tilted back in an attitude expressive of great importance. If

## Graystone

he should strike, then would the telegraph instruments cease clicking, the post-office go out of business, and the express office be closed indefinitely.

Heavens! If Jimmie Nolan should strike! That would settle the whole matter!

He was red-headed and aggressive. He was smoking a rank cigar, in defiance of an official notice posted up in the waiting-room, and gave scant heed to the message which the mine-boss handed through the window.

It was a telegram addressed to the sheriff of Greenwood County, and read:

“Come to Acton, or send deputies.  
Miners on strike and Italians threatening  
trouble.”

Jimmie took the paper and laid it carelessly on the table.

“Wires all busy,” he said, defiantly.

Then he tilted his chair back again and resumed his cigar. Jimmie Nolan had joined the strikers!

From the railroad station Richard returned to his house. As he walked slowly up the hill he saw a woman standing on his door-step.

## Graystone

She was well dressed ; and, when she turned to greet him, her beautiful face and figure seemed as much out of place in that locality as would a lovely rose, if found growing on top of the culm bank.

“I saw you as you were leaving Mr. Shaw’s office,” she said, advancing towards him, “and I recognized you at once.”

“Ruth !”

She was a cheering sight amidst all the encircling gloom.

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## CHAPTER XXV

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*“ In fine, the steele had pierced his pittb,  
So down to the earth bee fell forewith.”*

WHEN Arthur Waring returned from New York to Graystone he felt that the romance of his life was ended. Like Epimetheus, to him also had come a Pandora,—“the all-endowed,” the only woman on earth, possessed with the graces necessary to bring vexation upon man. And she had blessed his life for a brief period, and had then gone away, leaving him sorely troubled in spirit. At the same time, and on her account, he had lost his friend Doctor Fairlie.

The days appeared to be full of bitterness, and a depressing quiet had settled over Graystone. In Waring’s manner there was also a noticeable change. His beaming smile was but a shadow of its former cheerfulness, and he applied himself more closely to his books and his brierwood pipe.

## Graystone

For some time past the daily newspapers had been giving accounts of strikes spreading through the coal regions. The seriousness of the situation was the main topic of conversation among men,—in their offices, at their clubs, and in the lobbies of the hotels. Waring had taken no particular interest in the matter, excepting to express his disgust as he read the vapors of some obscure scribbler who from the safe vantage of his room in a Philadelphia boarding-house would send fictitious despatches to the “yellow” journals.

But while men of his intelligence would read such despatches with feelings of contemptuous pity for editors who would consent to their publication, the fact remained that, though basely conceived and published, they obtained wide circulation, and were the prime means through which the natural discontent of a few foreigners was intensified until the whole army of labor—the life-blood of the country—had become infected. In the mining regions of the Alleghenies work had already been entirely suspended. Thousands of idle men were thereby tempted to perpetrate deeds closely bordering

## Graystone

on crimes. The efforts of the local authorities to restore order had been laughed at, the sheriffs and their deputies had been overpowered, and the conditions had become so serious that the Governor of the commonwealth was compelled to call out the troops for the purpose of preserving order.

So quietly had everything been done in a night, so cheerfully had the citizen soldiers abandoned their usual occupations at the first call of their officers, so quickly had the ardent American spirit been aroused by its sense of duty to the State, that when morning came the pickets that had been placed around Acton by the over-sanguine Barney O'Farrell ran hastily to the committee's head-quarters, in a room over Mose Cullen's hardware store, breathless with excitement, and reported that the town was surrounded by soldiers,—a whole army of them,—and that all of the committee would be arrested!

"Howld yer gab!" said the unterrified Barney O'Farrell, imperiously. "It's the Dagoes and the Hungarians they're after, and not us at all."

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The "whole army of soldiers," as reported by the committee's pickets, consisted of Captain Waring's company, which had arrived by a special train at sunrise and had taken a position on an eminence which commanded the principal streets and buildings of Acton and the Acton Coal Company's collieries just beyond. The main body of troops was encamped within supporting distance.

He was Captain Waring now, and not lieutenant, as in the old days. An impulse born of his disappointment and his lonely life had induced him to offer his services to the State authorities, and he was now in command of a company in the National Guard.

The soldiers had not been called a day too soon. All through the winter and early spring the strike agitation started by Barney O'Farrell at Acton had increased and strengthened, so that it became the centre of a great disturbance which threatened to stop work in every mine in the State by the 1st of May; and, as frequently happens, the strike had continued for such a wearisome length of time that its original promoters had almost forgotten their motive for

## Graystone

striking, and would have abandoned it had it not gotten beyond their control.

In the places of the miners, who in the beginning had quietly discussed their grievances among themselves, there now appeared from the surrounding country innumerable ruffians and cranks of every shade and condition, who preached socialism and anarchy,—in other words, incited their fellows to kill and steal. This irresponsible riff-raff had so increased in numbers that they practically had possession of Acton.

When, therefore, the peaceful citizens of the place saw their country's flag floating gracefully over the captain's quarters at the edge of the village, they approached it with feelings of relief amounting almost to enthusiasm, and, with Squire Shaw at their head as spokesman, they assured Waring of their loyal assistance along whatever line of action he might decide upon.

After Waring had made a reconnoissance and placed his men to the best possible advantage, he sat down in the dilapidated shanty which he had taken as his head-quarters and proceeded to formulate his plans. There was no phase



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of the situation from which he could extract even a morsel of satisfaction. In whatever light he viewed it, there was nothing but irony in the fate that had dragged him from the comfortable depths of his library at Graystone to march around the wilds of the Allegheny Mountains at the head of an armed force of men, for the purpose of protecting the property of Brown & Co.

Brown & Co.! the head and front of which was his detested rival, the gilded fool, George Piggott.

Here was a nice occupation for a respectable, peace-loving, middle-aged gentleman to be engaged in!

For a moment he thought of ordering his company to "about face" and then rejoining the regiment with a report to his colonel that there was no disturbance at Acton, no need of soldiers to protect property or lives.

Ah, but there were *two* precious lives in Acton,—one nearer and dearer to him than all the world, and the other—— Well, a life-long friend is worth the trouble of protecting.

So long as Ruth Martine and Doctor Fairlie

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dwelt in Acton, that would be sufficient warrant for his good behavior. He would stay and protect the property of Brown & Co. with all the force at his command.

While Waring was thus brooding over his position, the tramps and ruffians in the town were having their own way. One frowsy-looking anarchist was making a speech to a crowd which contained not a single miner or citizen of Acton. He was wildly vociferating over what he called the "damnable outrage perpetrated on you, my fellow-laborers, of bringing here those accursed minions of the law—soldiers!—to shoot down innocent women and children." He continued at length in the same strain, finally getting his hearers into such a high state of excitement that it required but the slightest friction to precipitate lawlessness, with consequent frightful results.

And it occurred that evening.

A spying Italian, who was discovered crawling around in the rear of Captain Waring's head-quarters, had been captured by the guard after a lively scuffle, in which he attempted to use a murderous-looking long knife, and the

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desperation with which he resisted arrest seemed to warrant his detention, at least until morning.

The man proved to be the notorious "No. 10,"—as he was known throughout the coal regions. He was the leader of the foreign element in Brown & Co.'s operations and the cat's-paw for Barney O'Farrell.

Later in the evening a man approached Waring's head-quarters, and, seeing that he was well dressed and alone, the captain instructed the guards to admit him.

He introduced himself as Richard Black, and without much preliminary informed the captain that he had positive information from one of his miners that the fellow-countrymen of "No. 10," together with the worst element among the foreigners, were assembling in the forest for the purpose of attacking the camp and rescuing the captured Italian. They were several thousand strong, and their plan was to make an overpowering rush upon the camp from all sides at the same time.

"You might possibly avert the attack by releasing your prisoner," suggested Richard. "But I am afraid——"

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"Thank you," said Waring, curtly, interrupting him. "I will surrender the man to the proper authorities, and we will give the others a hearty reception."

Richard's blood was tingling in his veins.

"There is not a genuine miner in the whole crowd," he said, positively; "and, more than that, I will bring a hundred good miners into your camp, armed with stout pick-handles, in an hour's time."

"We will not need them. My men are all well drilled, and are prepared to repulse a mob of any size."

"But we might arrange signals," said Richard, as together they walked through the lines of pickets.

"There is no necessity; still——"

Suddenly a hoarse yell was heard coming from the direction of the forest. It was at first weak and irregular, and then grew louder and stronger, as if coming from an infuriated multitude.

"There they are now!" said Captain Waring, turning quickly.

The next word was one of command, and

## Graystone

the soldiers fell into line with the steady swing of old veterans.

"Use your bayonets only. You must not fire without orders," Waring commanded.

The howling grew louder on all sides of the intrepid square of bristling bayonets.

Barney O'Farrell appeared from behind a tree near the head-quarters. In the bright moonlight Richard could see that he was drunk and very much excited.

"Shet up!" he yelled to his noisy followers. —"We'll ate ye up in two minutes, ef ye doan' let the Eyetalian go!" he shouted to Waring.

The captain walked several paces in front of his men.

"Poor, ignorant fool!" he muttered, compassionately. "Look here, O'Farrell," he shouted, "I wish to speak with you. I——"

The report of a pistol sounded above the noisy commotion, and Waring lurched forward heavily, recovered himself by one supreme effort, and then tumbled backwards into the arms of Richard Black, who had rushed forward to save him from falling.

"Don't fire, men, don't——" he gasped, as

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Richard half led and half dragged him into the old shanty.

It was too late.

The soldiers, unaccustomed to such a sight, and maddened beyond restraint, poured a withering fire into the unarmed mob from every side of their square.

A yell of terror burst from the crowd, and, leaving many dead and wounded on the ground, the rioters scattered in every direction, like leaves before the wind.

Captain Waring was placed on a hastily-prepared bed in the dilapidated house on the hillside. His life blood was slowly ebbing away.

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## CHAPTER XXVI

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*"They have great stores and thriftye stockes,  
Great friends and feeble foes."*

WHENEVER John Shaw, J. P., of Acton, arrayed himself in his best suit of clothes, and, carrying his valise, walked down the boardwalk towards the station, the inhabitants of the town who were not working in the mines knew that it was court-week in the county-town of Belleville.

To John Shaw, surveyor and justice of the peace, court-week—that is, the week during which his presence was necessary as a witness in the various land cases under consideration with which he was familiar—came with a regularity approaching that of the moon's phases. These periodic visits of the squire's were as well known to the curiously idle as to the industrious women-folk, who regarded them as evidence that another season had come and

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gone. In the spring it happened at the time when the small gardens needed attention ; while in the fall it was considered a great risk to leave the potted plants out over night *after* the squire had been seen starting on his trip to Belleville. The frost was sure to catch them.

One morning the squire was noticed walking down the boardwalk, his heavy boots creaking over the loose boards with more noise than usual and his face wearing an expression of unconcern with which the circumstances failed to harmonize.

It was certainly not the time to plant potatoes, nor was it the period when the flowers should be brought indoors. They had been cared for long before.

And yet it looked as though the squire was on his way to Belleville !

It was as if the moon had risen in the daytime, or as if the sun had reversed its course and was about to set in the eastern sky. The women gazed after him and shook their heads in astonishment, while the children followed him in amazed wonder.

And the squire had walked manfully along,



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trying his best to look indifferently into the curious faces of his neighbors, and nerving himself during the ordeal by frequent movements of his hand to a breast-pocket which contained the documents that would prove Ruth Martine's title to the whole of Acton.

And not to Acton alone, but also to many miles of coal lands on the surrounding hills.

John Shaw was making a special trip to Belleville. He was about to undertake the most strenuous effort of his life. And all because a woman's black eyes had looked appealingly into his and a woman's soft voice had pleaded in his ears :

"*Dear* Mr. Shaw, won't you please help me?"

Of course, Mrs. Shaw knew nothing about *that*. Upon thinking the matter over, the squire had determined that he would not disclose to his wife his knowledge of the value of Ruth's papers, and he had solemnly assured his much-better-half that his unusual visit to Belleville was caused by an adjourned session of the court, and should in no way be considered as a regular one, but rather as supplementary to

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his previous trip, and ought not therefore be counted against him.

The squire's wife was not altogether satisfied with this explanation. In fact, it was rumored—the merest breath of suspicion—that when he returned the last time the squire had failed to satisfactorily account for various coffee-grains and cloves and round bits of red and white ivory which she found in the pockets of his best suit of clothes.

“They *may* belong to the game of tiddly-winks, such as the children play,” she said, slowly, looking him steadily in the face; and he was obliged to put on his great round spectacles as a protection before he could return her gaze.

But he determined to face everything for Ruth's sake, and his heart beat with anxiety as he once more felt in his pocket for the papers when he stood outside the office of James Middleton, the great land lawyer.

Everybody in the county knew Judge Middleton. If Belleville was mentioned to strangers, “The home of Judge Middleton, you know,” was always added parenthetically; and it was

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said with such assurance that very few exposed their ignorance by denying his acquaintance.

The judge was large and tall, with a smoothly-shaven, resolute face, overhanging eyebrows, and a large quantity of thick gray hair, which he was in the habit of tossing back by an imperious shake of the head, just as a lion does his mane, and which was very effective when addressing a jury.

Squire Shaw had more respect for the opinion of Judge Middleton than for any other living creature, with the single exception of his wife; and he therefore placed Ruth's papers in his hands with a confidence born of unquestioned belief.

It was the judge's manner to be jocular and familiar with his friends, and by a little judicious flattery, which cost him nothing, and a genuine big-heartedness, which was part of his nature, he won a place in the hearts of all who knew him that rendered him well-nigh invincible. He was a tower of strength to his friends and a terror to his enemies.

When Squire Shaw opened the door and entered the office, his cautious face almost

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hidden behind the large round spectacles, the judge hailed him at once :

“ Come in, squire ; come right in.”

He advanced a step or two, peered warily around the room, and then turned back to shut and lock the door.

The judge watched his movements with an amused expression on his face.

“ What’s up now, squire ? Got a gold mine up your sleeve ? or is it just a little piece of woodland some poor devil forgot to pay taxes on ?”

The squire did not reply, but, drawing a chair alongside the judge’s desk, proceeded to unfold the papers. Judge Middleton sat back in his chair, with his legs crossed comfortably on his desk, and during the time the squire was making a statement of the case he assumed a countenance expressive of half-amused interest in what the other was saying. Occasionally he would interrupt the squire by asking such frivolous questions as, “ What’s the girl like ? Is she pretty ? Eh, John ?” which caused him to almost lose his patience.

“ I firmly believe, judge,” he exclaimed, em-

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phatically, as he arose from the chair and began to gather the papers together, "that Miss Martine owns all the land purchased by Brown & Co., and more besides." He was flushed and indignant.

Judge Middleton was possessed of considerable tact. He perceived at once that he had irritated his friend, and he instantly changed his tone and manner.

"Let me see those papers, squire," he said, interestedly, holding out his hand for the documents. He removed his feet from the desk and bent over the papers with a strictly professional sigh, which was meant to convey to his visitor the impression that he was prepared to tax his already over-burdened brain with additional business, purely through friendship.

As he read the squire's carefully-prepared digest and examined the maps which were attached to it, his interest in the case increased, and he began to make notes and ask questions with the thoroughness for which he was renowned throughout the length and breadth of the county.

When his examination of the papers was

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completed, Judge Middleton arose from his chair and began pacing up and down the office, with both thumbs thrust into the arm-holes of his vest.

The squire looked at him circumspectly through his spectacles as he awaited the learned man's decision with breathless anxiety.

"It will be a long fight," said the judge at last; "and a hard one, too. But on the strength of those papers we can bore Brown & Co.'s titles so full of holes that they won't be worth the paper they are written on."

Squire Shaw removed his spectacles, revealing his gentle, kindly eyes.

"Miss Martine is not able to advance much money in the way of a fee," he said, as he fumbled at the strap of a well-worn pocket-book. "But I am willing to——"

"Not a cent, John; not a cent, until—well, until I ask you for it."

There was an unusual pressure in the grip with which the two men clasped hands, and an intelligence in the glance of their eyes which argued well for the cause of Ruth Martine.

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## CHAPTER XXVII

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*"Then paye you the price of your surquedrie  
With weeping, and wayling, and misery."*

DOCTOR FAIRLIE was appointed to the position of chief surgeon to the Acton Hospital, and he was somewhat surprised to find Ruth Martine already installed there as matron when he arrived.

Her presence recalled to his mind the unpleasant circumstances surrounding his last parting from his old friend Arthur Waring, and he could not help blaming her as being the cause of it.

From the time he first met her, at Graystone, after Miss Blake's death, he believed that she was not sincere in her friendship for Waring, and that she was trifling with a love which he knew was genuine. He argued in his mind that she would eventually marry the rich George Piggott, and he dreaded the

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effect such an announcement would have upon Waring.

It was, however, difficult to reconcile these preconceived notions with the existing facts that Ruth had gone through the severe training necessary to qualify her as a nurse and that she was now occupying a difficult position amidst disagreeable surroundings. He was obliged to admit to himself that there was evidently more sincerity in the woman than he had given her credit for; and he therefore generously decided to give her the benefit of his knowledge and experience whenever the opportunity should offer.

It was not long coming.

The wards were scarcely ready for occupancy when a sad procession of miners carried the quivering forms of three comrades into the hospital for treatment.

The treacherous roof in the Acton colliery had again fallen, and had almost crushed them to death.

This was followed by an explosion of dynamite at Brown & Co.'s operations, which resulted in four more maimed and bleeding men



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being placed under the care of Doctor Fairlie and Ruth.

But the worst was yet to come. It occurred on the dreadful night when the soldiers fired on the mob at close range ; and the number of wounded and dying received into the hospital as a consequence of that event might be likened to that resulting from a battle during war times.

Doctor Fairlie and Ruth were giving the unfortunate victims every possible attention. As they were one after another carried into the receiving-room, all suffering from gunshot wounds, the doctor experienced a great stimulation of his professional zeal.

"They are giving us lots of practice," he said to Ruth, cheerfully, when they met in the operating-room. "Why, you might go through a whole year's campaigning in the army and not see as many wounded as we have here to-night."

He was interrupted by loud murmurings, mingled with curses, which came from a large crowd gathered in front of the hospital.

"There will be more work for us, unless——"

Above the noise and tumult came a steady, imperative word of command,—

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"Halt!"

"Bless my soul!" exclaimed the doctor, looking out of the window. "There's a whole regiment of soldiers!"

He turned to address Ruth, but she had gone from the room.

A few moments afterwards she returned, crossing quickly to the doctor's side, her great black eyes dilated with terror.

"Oh, doctor, it's Arthur!" she whispered, and she seemed as if on the verge of collapse.

"Arthur!"

He was carefully bandaging the arm of a moaning Italian who had received a slight flesh-wound.

"Arthur!" he repeated, in perplexity.

"Mr. Waring,—your friend," she urged, and the blood rushed to her cheeks.

"What! Artie? How under the seven stars——"

The Italian patient was immediately handed over to an assistant, while Doctor Fairlie and Ruth hurried to Captain Waring.

They found him unconscious and weak from shock and loss of blood, lying on a couch as

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though he were dead. There was no time to lose.

The doctor made a hurried examination, and, turning to the officer in charge, he said, quickly,—

“The patient is alive; but he must have absolute quietness. I hope your force is sufficient to prevent any further disturbance.”

“We have the entire regiment here, doctor; and we will not allow any one to approach within half a mile of the hospital without your permission. There is not a man in Company B who wouldn’t——”

The young officer stopped abruptly and his voice trembled.

“Yes, I understand,” said the doctor, turning away.

Doctor Fairlie carefully studied Ruth’s face as he told her it would be necessary to perform an operation. If she felt equal to the task, he would begin at once; but any faltering or irresolution on her part might prove fatal to the patient.

“I would die for him,” she said, earnestly.

“That is just as I supposed,” returned the

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doctor, frowning. "But I want you to be very much alive, and to give me your assistance. Have you the courage?"

"I have the courage," Ruth answered, resolutely.

And the doctor saw in her pale face and sad, dark eyes an expression of calm, steady determination which quieted his fears.

Waring was carried into the operating-room, and the doctor proceeded with his work. At the slightest signal, often in anticipation of his needs, Ruth helped him in almost every motion which he made.

Outside of the hospital everything was quiet. A death-like calm seemed to have settled over the town. Not a sound disturbed the stillness of the night. In front of the building a sentry stood quietly. At intervals of twenty paces were others, equally quiet. Their instructions were to maintain silence.

The operation was completed by the extraction of a bullet which had entered the captain's body and lodged at a point beneath the shoulder-blade. What other injuries the bullet had inflicted could not at that time be determined.

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The profuse bleeding had been rather beneficial than otherwise, and the captain was already slowly arousing from his stupor. Ruth was instructed to give him a small quantity of wine. It was now but a question of nursing, and the doctor had no doubt that Ruth would give her patient the best attention.

She took entire charge of Waring, and watched him with tender devotion during the critical period in which his life was in the balance.

Nearly a month had passed. Waring was lying on his bed in the hospital, the windows having been opened to admit the balmy air of a warm day in May. He had no fever, and he gazed listlessly at the opposite mountains, noting the shadows cast on their verdant slopes by the passing fleecy clouds.

During the past few days Ruth had told him of all the happenings since they last met, and she had added a brief account of her struggles to acquire the proficiency she now possessed.

And, while he listened, his old love revived with double force. Whenever she perceived any evidence of his former attachment for her,

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she at once became reserved, and changed the subject of conversation or left him alone while she attended to some other of her many duties.

And then he would moan as if in pain, and toss from one side of his narrow bed to the other, tormented by feelings of doubt and indecision,—for she had said nothing to him of those matters of which he dreaded to speak.

Doctor Fairlie noticed a strange change in Ruth's manner, and it caused him much uneasiness.

One day the doctor smilingly assured her that all danger was past, and that her patient would live. She went to her room, and, sobbing with gratitude, fell upon her knees by her bedside, and her bursting heart prompted these fervent words, "Father, I thank thee! Oh, I thank thee!" When she arose she was pale and silent.

And while Waring gazed at the shadows and the fleecy clouds, she came to him with her reserved, shy manner, saying,—

"I would like to have a little talk with you, if—if you feel able."

The tone of her voice awakened in his mind memories of times long past: of the library

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at Graystone; of the delightful evenings spent before its cheerful fire, when she had asked him so many questions upon such a variety of subjects; of her struggles and aspirations; of her thirst for knowledge; and of her desire to solve life's problem by the acquirement of independent thought and action. He raised himself on one elbow, bowed with mock gravity, and in the same manner as of old, replied,—

*"A votre service, mademoiselle."*

But she was not satisfied. Tears filled her eyes, and her voice almost choked with emotion as she faltered,—

"I am happy,—and still miserable. If you could advise me——" Then her voice failed, and she stood pale and irresolute.

He took her soft white hand in his lean, emaciated one.

"If you can trust me, Ruth," he said, gravely.

And, as their eyes met, all barriers were swept away. All pride and false sensibility, all pernicious doctrines of woman's independence and singleness of purpose melted before the best and highest power, the beginning and end of all things,—Everlasting Love.

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## CHAPTER XXVIII

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*"The grasse nowe ginnes to be refresht,  
The swallowe peeps out of her nest."*

**S**PRING was in the air. Warm breezes came from the south, bringing to the winter-bound inhabitants of Acton renewed life and vigor.

It was to Ruth and Waring a season of love and tenderness; it revived the memories of former happy days; of fervent thoughts and lofty aspirations, and of hope and faith. The forests were green, and under the shade of the new foliage the fragrant pink and white rhododendrons were blossoming.

Whenever the sun was shining brightly they would go from the dreary environment of the hospital, from the blackness of Acton, to the green banks of the placid little stream that rippled musically through the winding valley, which they reached by strolling along the



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Mill Road,—cool and soft to the foot,—with its carpet of pine firs and tiny threads of spring water.

With his army blanket spread beneath them on the edge of the bank, they sat and watched the sparkling current bubbling over its rocky bed, loitering in the dark deep pools, and winding about in curving, flowing grace.

Those were days of peace and happiness and contentment.

They were sitting thus one balmy afternoon when Ruth began :

“But I really wished to speak to you that day when—when——”

“I saw the question in your dear eyes, and allowed it to pass in silence. Oh, Ruth, my——”

“But you *must* listen to me,” she interrupted, imperiously, thrusting the point of her parasol into the velvety grass, as if to punctuate her remarks.

“Tut! tut! you should not attempt such tyrannical domineering over a weak, wounded man. Such——”

“Arthur, *please* listen to me,” she pleaded.

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Her wondrous dark eyes flashed such an expression of loving entreaty that he became lost in admiration of her beauty. Reverently he leaned towards her and kissed her hand. He realized that God was good to him. Hereafter he would devote his life to her. Together they would endeavor to work out life's problem.

"I am listening," he said, humbly.

"In the first place, my mother——"

"Ruth, forgive me," he said, interrupting her. "I forgot to inquire——"

"She died while I—while you were—so—very ill." Her eyes became moist. "I was obliged to leave you for awhile. It seemed to me cruel; but Doctor Fairlie said he would take good care of you, and——"

"Dear old Jack," he said, sighing impulsively.

At which a shadow crossed Ruth's expressive face.

"But the critical period had passed," she said, reproachfully.

"I am sure of it," he instantly asserted, "or you would never have deserted—have left me."

And the shadow passed away from Ruth's face.

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"But there are other things,—oh, so many things," she went on, rapidly. "I hardly know where to begin. A woman can do so little."

"Ruth, you saved my life," he said, solemnly.

"With Doctor Fairlie's valuable assistance," she answered.

"But without your nursing, without your presence as an inspiration, I would have died. It was for your sake that I desired to live," he exclaimed.

She was silent for awhile, and sat with down-cast eyes, her face being turned slightly away from Waring.

"There is another person to whom you owe a great deal," she went on, earnestly. "He is a man of such remarkable modesty that he made me promise not to speak of a noble deed in which he risked his own life to save yours and a score of others."

"I must see him at once," said Waring, half arising from his reclining posture. "What is his name?"

"Richard Black."

"Black,—oh, yes; the mine-boss. He is a

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brave fellow. I remember that he was there when the coward O'Farrell shot me."

Ruth trembled nervously and drew closer to him.

"Don't speak of that villain," she implored. "I wished to tell you that Richard—Hm!—Mr. Black—received information from one of the miners that your camp was located directly over a room in his mine in which the rioters had stored a lot of powder with the intention of blowing you and your company to pieces——"

"Je—rusalem!" he said, in an undertone. "That would have been a sad day for Company B."

"Yes; all would have been killed," she said, with a shudder. "The fuse had already been lighted, when Rich—er—Mr. Black knocked him down."

"Knocked who down?" he inquired, lazily.

The sun was so pleasantly warm and he felt so satisfied with the present, so contented to gaze into her beautiful eyes, to watch the fleeting expressions pass over her white brow and curved lips, that the past seemed nothing to him.

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"He knocked down the man who lighted the fuse," she replied. And then she went on, hurriedly, "He trampled on the—the——"

"Man?" Waring suggested, languidly.

"No; the fuse!" Ruth answered, with visible excitement. "I declare you are too provoking."

Waring thoughtfully restrained his happy mood, and observed,—

"A noble fellow—Richard Black."

"But that is not his name," she said, somewhat confused. "I wished to explain, so that you—and yet I promised not to tell you, because——"

She stopped abruptly, and he noticed that her lips quivered in an apparent struggle to retain her composure.

"Come, Ruth," he said, quietly; "the sun is going down, and it is time——"

But she was determined, and prevented him from arising by a motion of her white hand.

"His name is Piggott,—Richard Piggott,—and not Black. He has suffered much misery and unhappiness. His wife was wicked, while he is brave and noble. He is a brother of George Piggott."

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"Poor devil! that's not his fault. He cannot be blamed for that," Waring hastened to assure her. Then, noticing her puzzled expression, he went on, with exaggerated emphasis, "You see, Ruth, when a fellow is born, he is not permitted to chose his brethren. That is a matter——"

She placed her hand over his mouth and prevented him from continuing.

"Then, you are not offended because—because——"

"Because he saved my life and the lives of my men?" he questioned.

The gray moustache hardly concealed his smiling lips. He looked quickly up and down the Mill Road, and then attempted to encircle her in his arms.

"Stop!" she commanded, with fluttering apprehension, "The doctor said you must not get excited."

"Oh, hang the doctor!" he growled, with ingratitude. "Who cares for Jack Fairlie?"

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## CHAPTER XXIX

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*"Puffed up with pryde and vaine pleasaunce ;  
But all his glee had no continuance."*

**G**EORGE PIGGOTT was on the crest of his prosperous wave. The firm of Brown & Co. had been successful beyond his expectations. Mr. Brown's friends had exerted their influence in many different ways, and the business was booming; which fact proved that the bonus stock of the company had been judiciously apportioned.

One morning the assistant bookkeeper, whose duty it was to open the letters, noticed among the mail matter a legal-looking document, to which he especially called the attention of the secretary, who glanced over it, and then passed it on to Mr. Piggott, who, wearied by its tiresome length, referred it to the solicitor.

The latter individual was the only one of the four who had brains enough to realize its

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importance. He examined it with his usual thoroughness, and as he progressed he became perplexed, and his anxiety continued to increase until he reached the end.

"Middleton?" he said, thoughtfully. "It seems to me——" He touched an electric button, and a pale-faced, slender young man in spectacles entered.

"George, look up these people, and let me know what you find out."

Then Hardy, the great corporation lawyer, turned to his other papers and put the subject aside.

Several hours later the slender young man again entered the solicitor's office and stood silently beside him. When the lawyer had finished the letter he was writing, he glanced up, inquiringly.

"Well, George?"

"I wish to speak to you about those papers relating to Brown & Co. which you referred to me this morning," the young man explained.

"Yes. What about them?"

"They seem to be very carefully drawn up,



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and I find that Judge Middleton stands quite high as a land lawyer. It might be well—that is, perhaps *you* had better——”

“Yes. I thought they involved a matter that would require my personal attention. Please call up Mr. Piggott, and say that I would like to see him on very important business. Make an appointment with him to-day, if possible.”

Nearly six months later Squire Shaw again signified to the people of Acton that court-week at Belleville had once more arrived,—by appearing on the streets in his best suit of clothes, with his valise in his hand,—and that it was the time to plant even the most tender flowers.

Judge Middleton received him with much cordiality.

“They’re all here, John,” he said; “and they have with them a prominent New York lawyer, who evidently knows as much about Pennsylvania land-laws as—well—as you know about logarithms.”

The squire thought in a vague way he ought

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to know something about logarithms, as he had heard they were used by the young upstarts of civil engineers in making their calculations; but on second thought he concluded that it was safer to laugh.

"Yes, or sines and cosines," he suggested, just to show the judge that he knew a thing or two besides common land-surveying.

"Of course, you can never tell which way the cat is going to jump until you see it done; but before those New York gentlemen get through they will know more about land-titles in this county than they ever did before.—How is the little Sister of Mercy?" he suddenly added.

"Miss Martine is very well," the squire answered, with jealous stiffness.

"I hope she experienced no ill effects from the fright she received when her lover was shot. I hear you acted like a hero, John,—had the rascals up by the heels with warrants in a jiffy."

"We used all the power we could command to quell the disturbance," said the squire, determinately.

And then they started for the court-house.

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It was a great fight,—one of the most important legal contests ever argued in the courts of Pennsylvania.

Judge Middleton made the speech of his lifetime, in which he very pathetically pictured his client, Miss Martine, the daughter of an old resident of the county, now an orphan, friendless and alone, spending her life in caring for the sick and injured in the hospital at Acton, now appealing for her just rights, which were taken from her by Brown & Co., an arrogant foreign corporation.

Squire Shaw was a very necessary witness. He sat gazing serenely through his big round spectacles, ever ready to answer all questions in his usual kindly way; and in giving his testimony as to the lines, the courses, and the distances he made a deep impression on the court. From hemlock stumps to old beech-trees, from stone corners to ancient landmarks, he led the opposing lawyers a lively chase across bewildering maps and through overlapping surveys, until they were forced by the confusion of their ideas to cease questioning him further.

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It was Squire Shaw who carried the news of the great victory to Ruth Martine. He found her in the reception-room of the hospital, in Acton, conversing with Richard Black, the mine-boss. It would have pleased the squire better to have found her alone, but his feelings of extreme joy overcame that objection, and he exclaimed,—

“We have won the case, Miss Martine!”

She ran towards him, and, taking his head between her soft, warm hands, she kissed him on his big, overhanging forehead, and then she gently patted the bald spot, so that he nearly fainted with apprehension lest Mrs. Shaw should come in unexpectedly.

“You *dear, dear* Mr. Shaw,” she murmured. “How can I ever repay you?”

“I did not do it at all,” he said, modestly, hastily taking refuge behind his glasses and trying to look dignified. “Judge Middleton made a powerful speech.”

After Squire Shaw left the room, Ruth turned towards Richard Black, who had stepped forward to congratulate her.

“You deserve it, Ruth,” he said, simply.

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And she, laughing, asked him,—

“Perhaps you can tell me where I might find a really good man to act as general manager of the property?”

“Then, you know that George offered me the position?” asked Richard, his face becoming suffused with redness.

“Yes; and in doing so, I believe he displayed excellent judgment,” Ruth answered.

“But he wanted Richard Black,” said the mine-boss, dubiously. “He did not know——”

“That I wanted Richard Piggott,” she interrupted.

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## CHAPTER XXX

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*"The simple ayre, the gentle warbling wynde,  
So calme, so coole, as no where else I fynde."*

**R**UTH and Arthur Waring, having just returned from their wedding-trip to the neighborhood of the old Abbey of Villers-la-Ville,—where he had first met her,—went out one bright morning in June to take possession of their future home,—Graystone.

As on her first visit to that delightful place with her aunt, Miss Blake, they left the street-car at the head of the familiar old lane and proceeded along the foot-path.

Occasionally they would stop to take long breaths of the flower-scented summer air as they recognized at various turns in the path the views so deeply engraved on their memories.

There were no changes; everything was serene and peaceful. Not a cloud was visible

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in the sky. The scent of roses perfumed the atmosphere. A thin, quivering haze was suspended over the adjacent fields. As they passed along the road a horse thrust his head through the bars of a wayside fence for the purpose of nibbling the long grass that grew at the edge of the highway.

"Poor old Frank!" Ruth said, as she stroked his glossy neck.

"The same old pony, whose affection you originally won with innumerable lumps of sugar," said Waring.

The animal seemed to remember her, for he attempted to lay his head on her shoulder in a friendly manner.

"Even the dumb animals seem to love you, Ruth," Waring observed, jealously.

Thus they walked together along the sun-lit road; down the hill, between high banks of wild honeysuckles and tall chestnut-trees; past the old spring-house, close by the three great buttonwood-trees, and up the opposite slope to the iron gateway leading to Graystone.

A tall young colored woman stood in the wide-open doorway, apparently endeavoring to

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control a smile which threatened to overspread her face. With scrupulous care Phyllis had been trained by her anxious mother to preserve a decorum fitting for the occasion.

"Ef Mars Arthur fines you skippin' 'round like a chile, he think you done got no sense," she had been told repeatedly by Sallie.

And so Phyllis was doing her very best to look dignified and unconcerned when Waring and Ruth arrived.

But one could as well have tried to tame a brownie.

At Ruth's first greeting, "Well, Phyllis!" the impulsive young woman rushed forward, and, taking Ruth's hand in both of hers, she began to kiss it, at the same time uttering the most extravagant expressions of delight.

Then Sallie appeared in wrathful indignation, exclaiming,—

"'Fore de Lawd, chile! Ef you ain't de most provokinist——!"

"Never mind, Sallie. Never mind," interrupted Waring, soothingly; "I've brought back your honey-bird."

The angry expression faded away from the



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face of the old servant, as she extended her hand.

“ Well, Miss Ruth !” she cried, in delighted astonishment. “ Mars Arthur nebber tole me ’twas *you* ! Praise de Lawd ! Miss Ruth, I certainly *is* glad !”





